

Experience *in Action!*

King County RSVP's news for people 55 & older

Volume 41 | Issue 1 | Spring 2026



Solid Ground's Giving Garden The community-building legacy of urban agriculture at Marra Farm

By Becky Rosenberg

Have you participated in a neighborhood P-Patch or vegetable garden, or passed one and wondered how it came to be? Turns out, these are part of a long tradition that's expanded locally over the past 50+ years.

Scholars documented urban agricultural practices as early as 3500 B.C. in Mesopotamia, and aqueducts that provided water for urban gardens in Persia 1500 years later. Machu Picchu fed its 200,000 residents through careful water use in the 15th century.

In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, cities including London, Paris, and Stockholm provided

"allotment gardens" for the poor. American architect Frank Lloyd Wright was a proponent of agriculture on his Broadacre City home plots in the 1930s.

The 20th century's world wars and Great Depression were periods when urban gardens provided essential nutrition in a multitude of cities, including "victory gardens" throughout the U.S. With suburbanization and improved transportation, the practice died out after WWII – however it revived in the U.S. in the 1970s. As landlords abandoned unprofitable residential buildings, communities claimed the lots for planting, boosting nutrition,



"Tomato guy" Joe Villegas at the Marra Farm Giving Garden (photo by Liz Reed Hawk)

**Solid Ground's King County RSVP
(Retired and Senior Volunteer Program)**

1501 N 45th St, Seattle, WA 98103

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and enhancing neighborhoods.

Urban agriculture has been increasingly acknowledged for its social and environmental benefits. Transporting produce across significant distances contributes up to 20% of the environmental impact of food production and distribution. Growing locally can cut gas emissions and provide nutritious food to households with limited incomes and in food deserts.

Marra Farm in Seattle's South Park neighborhood comprises 8.7 acres of historic farmland. Solid Ground is one of several community groups that continues the legacy of urban farming there, cultivating a ¾-acre Giving Garden, established in 1996. Vegetables are planted, tended, weeded, and harvested by volunteers under the expert guidance of staff.

Scott Behmer has been a Solid Ground Farm Coordinator since 2010. What drew him to it was the opportunity to join his experience of gardening and farming with a social justice mission. During the growing season, the farm produces 15-20 varieties of vegetables – donated to local food banks – including Providence Regina House and Sea Mar Seattle Medical Clinic.

This is only possible thanks to volunteers – both regulars who show up weekly and one-timers, including employee work parties. Some volunteers arrive with gardening experience and skills (but skills aren't necessary).

Part of the Giving Garden's mission is to educate volunteers and community members about organic gardening and nutrition. It doesn't take a lot to guide new volunteers to plant, weed, and harvest.

For "regulars," it's a chance to get outdoors, be physically active, and provide a valuable service. Staff also create opportunities to bring volunteers together to celebrate their work. A quarterly pizza party was so popular that Solid Ground bought a wood-fired pizza oven – and then a second when one wasn't enough! Scott says he's impressed with the way volunteers form community, develop friendships, share interests, and even hang out together outside of the farm.

Joe Villegas is an RSVP member who began volunteering after retiring from a corporate finance career six years ago. Joe always had his own garden and saw Marra Farm as a terrific opportunity to combine his love of gardening with his desire to find a nonprofit organization where he could make a meaningful contribution. One thing led to another, and now he also serves on Solid Ground's Board of Directors.

Joe speaks with great enthusiasm about his love for the work and the benefits it provides. He delights in the camaraderie among volunteers who see each other regularly. Some volunteers arrive with or develop specialties, including carpentry

Continued on page 4

E*ia* Inside This Issue...

Celebrating Appreciation

- The power of appreciation.....p. 2
- Appreciation is a two-way street.....p. 3
- The many faces of appreciationp. 4
- Sonny Meadows' volunteer heart.....p. 5
- What's new for Medicare in 2026p. 6
- Site partner & program appreciations.....p. 7



Speaking Directly

By Ann Pelayre, RSVP Coordinator

The power of appreciation

Think about the last time someone expressed their gratitude to you. Maybe they said, "Thank you," wrote you a note, or gave you a heartfelt hug. How did that make you feel? Did it lift your mood, inspire you to pay it forward, or deepen your connection with that person? Feeling appreciated is a powerful tool that tends to foster feelings of happiness, positivity, build and strengthen relationships, and increase your overall wellbeing.

Over the past few years, I've experienced various life changes, both positive and challenging. Each morning, I take a moment to reflect on gratitude, and I also keep a guiding message in mind for moments of uncertainty or self-doubt: Instead of asking whether my glass is half full or half empty, I now ponder if it can be refilled.

I look ahead to the day and find that collaborating with others, making new connections, or helping RSVP volunteers find opportunities that are a good fit helps refill my glass. When I can connect and help others, it increases my happiness no matter how significant the help is. And if they take the time to acknowledge it, not only do I feel valued, but I also know I had a positive impact, and that inspires me to keep going.

My journey with Solid Ground began as a volunteer during a transitional period after leaving the corporate sector. I took a long sabbatical to decide what I wanted to do next. I went on a few trips, dabbled in hobbies, got a certification, and even contemplated early retirement. At the time, I didn't realize I was seeking connection, the need to contribute meaningfully, and to add value.

Parting ways with my corporate profession severed daily connections with colleagues and friends, leaving me feeling disconnected and at times questioning my own capabilities. Volunteering provided a crucial bridge, allowing me to remain engaged with my community and address feelings of isolation and self-doubt.

Through this involvement, I discovered common ground with fellow volunteers, which fostered new relationships and expanded my skill set. Participating in volunteer activities not only enhanced my sense of belonging but reaffirmed what studies show: Volunteering promotes physical activity, mental stimulation, and emotional fulfillment.

The sense of purpose and achievement I derived from these experiences had a positive impact on my health and outlook on life. My volunteer work helped pave the way for my current role as the RSVP Program Coordinator of King County, for which I am sincerely grateful.

Reflecting on my first partnership with one of our longtime RSVP Ambassadors, I felt excited at the opportunity to gain experience from his expertise and observe his volunteer recruitment skills in action. We tabled



together at a senior center event. As I watched him interact with visitors, capturing their interest and engaging each person, I made mental notes and tried to emulate his technique.

Soon after the event started, I noticed he was already introducing potential volunteers to me, presenting me as the new RSVP Program Coordinator. I was genuinely honored by his trust in my abilities and impressed by the effortless and graceful way he supported me. I was thankful for the entire experience because it was not only fun but an incredible learning opportunity.

This edition of *Experience In Action (EIA)* celebrates appreciation, highlighting the incredible efforts of our RSVP volunteers. It's both an honor and a privilege to acknowledge them for their invaluable time, effort, and dedication.

In 2025, 188 RSVP volunteers collectively contributed 22,000+ hours, a truly remarkable achievement. The breadth of experience and expertise each volunteer brings – often developed over years or decades – is instrumental in enhancing their contributions.

Whether you tutor, mentor, help a senior, recruit, or support adult day facilities and food banks – to name just a handful of opportunities – your efforts are both diverse and impactful. Your commitment to lend a helping hand and show kindness and care make a meaningful difference in the lives of people across King County.

Over the past year, I've discovered that our RSVP volunteers are driven by a powerful desire to contribute, connect, and make a positive impact. Your efforts help inspire others to get involved, and their contributions are a testament to the power of giving back. Your dedication and passion for helping others make you invaluable.

We want to recognize, with gratitude, your support and efforts so we can ensure this legacy of service continues to thrive – because what you do is important and impactful.

We'd also like to take a moment to extend a special heartfelt thanks to **Carol Scott-Kassner** and **Gwen Campbell**, two longtime EIA contributors who recently moved on to pursue new adventures. Carol's column, *Aging with Wisdom*, has enriched RSVP volunteers' lives since 2008! We're so grateful for the time, passion, and dedication they've each devoted to their articles, which have brought enjoyment to readers over the years.

Interested in joining this dedicated, engaged group of RSVP volunteers – or want to learn more about ways you can contribute to strengthening our community? We'd love to see you at an RSVP info session (details below). ●

Upcoming RSVP Info Sessions

For volunteers 55 and older. Join us on Zoom to learn more about critical community needs in King County!

- Wed, March 11, 1–3pm | solid-ground.org/rsvp-3-11-26
- Wed, May 6, 10am–12pm | solid-ground.org/rsvp-5-6-26
- Wed, September 16, 1–3pm | solid-ground.org/rsvp-9-16-26

Upcoming Volunteer Orientations

For any and all potential Solid Ground volunteers. Join us on Zoom to learn about all of our current volunteer needs!

- Tues, April 7, 1–3pm | solid-ground.org/vol-orient-4-7-26
- Wed, May 27, 5–7pm | solid-ground.org/vol-orient-5-27-26

Ambassador Interest Meeting

Tuesday, March 31, 2026, 11am – 2pm

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

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.



It Seems to Me...

By Peter Langmaid

Appreciation is a two-way street

Alongside “please” and “thank you,” “appreciation” is a powerful expression of gratitude we’d all do well to know inside and out. No one knows this better than organizations that rely on volunteers to fulfill their missions.

Like all of us, I looked forward to retirement. The problem was, I didn’t have a plan for what I would do. I didn’t have any burning desire to learn a new language or take up a new hobby like woodworking or stamp collecting, but I did have a degree in English Literature and experience tutoring my own kids through their primary and secondary school years. Discussing this dilemma one day with a friend, she suggested I reach out to a start-up afterschool tutoring program. So I gave it a try and continued with it until the commute time became unbearable.

Though appreciation wasn’t my motivation, two incidents made the whole experience worthwhile. One student I tutored struggled in school, partly because English was his second language and not spoken

routinely at home. We became good friends, and one afternoon near the end of the school year, he and his mother presented me with a token to show their appreciation for my efforts. The gesture was unexpected and overwhelming.

A second incident happened in the lobby of a movie theater when a woman approached me and thanked me for tutoring her son, who was now in college. These two incidents were indescribably moving for me and made the long commute more than worthwhile.

Like all good habits, appreciation begins at home. My wife has always been a good cook, but over the last few years she’s transformed herself into a great cook. I love her inventiveness and look forward to each new dish. Unfortunately, I never told her how much I enjoy her cooking and assumed my coming back for three helpings would convey the message. I was wrong and now realize appreciation is an act of celebration, and needs to be expressed, not assumed.

If the need for appreciation



is your motivation to volunteer, chances are you’ll be disappointed. A fellow volunteer at our local food bank occasionally grumbles about rude and ungrateful food bank guests. I tell her that if she’s looking for gratitude, the food bank isn’t the place to get it. People come to us because they’re hungry and show their appreciation by coming back week after week. Serving the need is the whole point – though I should add that many guests are most appreciative and say so.

Finally, for me, volunteering and appreciation are two-way streets. Whereas my efforts are appreciated, I, in turn, appreciate the opportunity to serve. Nothing is more satisfying than helping others.

If you’re not already a volunteer, give it a try. Your contributions will be appreciated, and you’ll feel better about yourself. ●

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

Gifts of volunteering by Paul Jeganathan

Appreciation is often emotional, reflecting a sense of thankfulness toward someone or something. Recognition often comes with a heartfelt expression of gratitude. In many ways, appreciation and recognition go together.

What do I appreciate the most about volunteering? I’ll mention two things: the learning opportunities and the interactions with people – both other volunteers and those I help.

It was accidental that I started volunteering at a hospital. Literally, it was an accident that put me there. I was in the Physical Medicine Rehabilitation ward with a broken femur. While in the hospital, I made friends with physical therapists and patients.

Weeks after I left, I went back to visit my ‘patient friends.’ All they wanted were visitors to whom they could talk. I was young, just out of college, and thought I should also talk to them. I didn’t know at that time that all I had to do was just listen to them, even though I didn’t always understand their experiences.

Years later, I found a church where people

encouraged me to volunteer – and I did. Here, I had a certain learning opportunity. I was encouraged to take a training course called Stephen Ministries, whose focus is to help people help themselves by encouraging them to talk openly about their problems. Part of the training was to develop listening skills. This helped me in my day-to-day life as well. Soon I realized that people just wanted to talk, and what they received was the satisfaction of having someone who would listen to them.

Later, through RSVP, I got the opportunity to volunteer with Cancer Lifeline. There, volunteers received 60 hours of intense training, including learning to listen to people.

I’m grateful for these opportunities, because not only did I learn to listen, I developed listening techniques: being present, showing interest, noticing nonverbal signals, and asking questions.

Volunteering has offered me the opportunity to meet and interact with a variety of different people – doctors, nurses and other professionals, patients and their parents, and caregivers, for which I am very appreciative. ●



**AmeriCorps
Seniors**

RSVP

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 among people 55 and older in King County.



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.

EIA EDITORS

Amy Davis, Jennifer Gahagan,
Alex Olsen, Ann Pelayre,
Liz Reed Hawk, Carol-Ann Smith

EIA COMMITTEE

Paul Jeganathan,
Peter Langmaid, Bill Pharr,
Becky Rosenberg

PHONE
206.694.6786

EMAIL
RSVP@solid-ground.org

MAILING ADDRESS
1501 North 45th Street
Seattle, WA 98103-6708

WEB
solid-ground.org/RSVP

PRINTING DONATED: DCG ONE



Financial Planning

By Bill Pharr

The many faces of appreciation

Financial topics have been the subject matter of all of the EIA articles I've written over the years. Since the theme of this issue is "Appreciation," this may be my shortest article so far.

Here goes: Buy low and sell high – solid and time-tested advice that will always be relevant! Buy at \$100 and sell at \$112, and you have 12% appreciation. The appreciation is sometimes long-term and sometimes short-term. Pay the taxes and keep doing the same thing again, forever!

Joking aside, I'd like to discuss the other definition of the word appreciation: Recognizing the value, worth, or quality of someone or something, often shown through gratitude, admiration, or thanks. It's a positive feeling – expressed through words, actions, or gestures – that acknowledges goodness, improves wellbeing, and strengthens connections.

You can find examples of appreciation everywhere. Here are a few of mine:

1) I'm a First Tee golf coach. First Tee is a national program where volunteers like me coach groups of young people on how to play golf and work on specific life skills. A teenage girl approached me recently as I was leaving a restaurant. She asked, "Are you a First Tee coach?" and I said, "Yes." She then said, "You coached me when I was 12, and you were my favorite coach." (She left her dinner table to run over to me to tell me that!) When expressing appreciation to someone for what they did, you also make them feel great. This young lady is going to do good in the world.



2) I recently read a book titled *Who Is Government?* by Michael Lewis. The book has nine stories about government workers who do valuable things through their work. They include IRS Agents who protect us from various types of fraud, a former coal mine worker making mines safer for miners, and government workers helping veterans get proper health care. The point of the book is that government workers help all of us have better lives. They often work unnoticed and don't get the recognition they deserve. We should appreciate these government workers for the work they do for us every day in America.

3) I also appreciate and acknowledge competent customer service. When I make necessary phone calls to my insurance or internet companies, I always hope to get someone competent, trained to have the necessary skills to do their job well. Occasionally, I get someone who's especially

skilled and helpful, who listens closely to my reason for calling. It's a hard job answering the phone all day. Whenever my experience is positive, I always ask if I can speak to or email their supervisor to put in a good word for them. Their jobs are so important.

4) I have a great neighbor. He does things for us just because. One January years ago, we were on vacation, and it snowed big time in Seattle. He knew we were getting home that evening, and he cleared all the snow from our driveway and walkway. It was a pleasant surprise after a long day of travel. He's always helping us with something without us having to ask. I appreciate him very much.

5) My wife is a really great person who always does wonderful things for folks. She makes meals for people we know when they're recovering from illness or injury. Recently, she and I both had surgeries, and friends brought meals over to us. One friend even stayed a couple of days to help us out. When you do good things for other people, they do good things for you in appreciation. Not terribly complicated, is it?

Everyone can experience appreciation, both receiving and giving. Taking time to say thanks is the way to go. And remember: **Buy low and sell high!** ●

Bill Pharr is a retired business owner and financial advisor, RSVP Ambassador, and regular EIA contributor.

Joe with fellow RSVP Giving Garden volunteer, Beverly (photo by Clarissa Magdich)



Giving Garden continued from page 1

skills, handling power tools, or weeding. To recognize their connection, the volunteers designed "SOLID GROUND INDIVIDUAL REGULAR VOLUNTEER" badges (see photos above), depicting a carrot, bucket, tomato, and trowel. Joe is a "tomato guy."

Joe says that the Giving Garden staff's appreciation for volunteers is clear: They're respectful, supportive, helpful, and deeply committed to their responsibilities. And the volunteer pizza parties are highly appreciated! ●

OPEN FOR THE SEASON ... Solid Ground's Giving Garden at Marra Farm

We need volunteers to build soil, prepare vegetable beds, plant vegetable starts and seeds, weed by hand, compost, water, harvest, wash produce, and distribute produce to the community food bank and other locations. Many of our volunteers start with limited or no gardening knowledge and learn as they go, so we welcome you with whatever experience you bring. To get involved, please contact:

Ann Pelayre | 206.694.6786 | rsvp@solid-ground.org



Volunteer Spotlight

By Valley Medical Center (with big contributions from Sonny herself)

Sonny Meadows' volunteer heart, one gift at a time

Step into any room where Sonny Meadows volunteers, and you'll feel it: that rare combination of calm, care, and quiet joy that makes people feel instantly at ease. Raised in a military family that traveled across Europe, Sonny learned early how to build connections in unfamiliar places. These early lessons now shape how she shows up: with empathy, grace, and a deep respect for everyone she encounters.

Healing hands at the hospital

Sonny is a devoted grandmother and lifelong volunteer. She's dedicated decades to serving her community through healthcare outreach, children's programs, and compassionate advocacy. She currently volunteers weekly with Valley Medical Center and Birthday Dreams.

As a retired nurse, Sonny brings both clinical skills and deep compassion to her service. Every Monday morning, she arrives at Valley Medical Center's Breast Center, where her steady presence is a source of comfort for patients and staff alike. Previously, she volunteered at the Cancer Resource Center, providing patients and family members with information, resources, and support.

She's also volunteered with the American Cancer Society and community health clinics, guided by the belief that giving back isn't just an act of kindness but a way of life. "When you've been blessed," she often says, "it's important to give back with intention and heart." Sonny's ability to hold space with grace and steadiness makes her a beloved presence wherever she serves.

Celebrating childhood, one gift at a time

On Thursdays, Sonny volunteers at Birthday Dreams, a nonprofit that creates birthday celebrations for children experiencing homelessness. As a proud grandmother of four, she understands the joy and importance of being seen on one's special day.

She wraps presents, crafts handmade hats, and adds thoughtful touches to each birthday kit. "Every child deserves to feel celebrated on their birthday," Sonny says. "You never know what that one moment might mean to them."



Sonny (left) at the Breast Center with Valley Medical Center staff

For Sonny, meaningful volunteering means showing up consistently – with energy, commitment, and joy. Whether offering a comforting word to a patient or carefully tying the ribbon on a birthday gift, she reminds us that small, loving acts – repeated with purpose – can spark lasting joy.

In every ribbon that's tied, every hand that's held, Sonny builds a legacy of care – one that shows us how ordinary acts, done with heart, become extraordinary. And that's exactly what she does. One Monday morning, one birthday gift, one compassionate gesture at a time. ●

A special thank you from RSVP

Sonny Meadows has volunteered with RSVP for more than 15 years, serving over 2,000 hours. She's deeply caring, leads by example, and shows up for others through consistent, heartfelt service.

Thank you so much, Sonny – for your service and being a part of our community. We appreciate all that you do!



GROUNDSWELL GALA

Save the Date

Friday, May 15

You're invited to an evening of purpose as we stand together to make change!

Reception | Dinner | Afterparty

solid-ground.org/gala



Need help navigating Medicare? SHIBA volunteers can help!

SHIBA (Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors) offer free, unbiased Medicare education and assistance through the Washington state Office of the Insurance Commissioner.

- Find Medicare options that meet your personal needs.
- Learn about Medicare cost assistance programs, eligibility, and enrollment.
- Compare Medicare plans and prices.
- Report health care fraud and abuse.

For help, call **206.753.4806** or **1.800.562.6900**, or email us at: shiba@solid-ground.org.

For upcoming Medicare events, help, and info, visit: solid-ground.org/medicare-info.

To learn more about SHIBA, go to: insurance.wa.gov/medicare.

To see all upcoming events, visit our website at solid-ground.org/workshops/#medicare.

QUESTIONS? Email shiba@solid-ground.org.



What's new for Medicare in 2026

Medicare costs and coverage change each year. Here's an overview of important Medicare cost updates for 2026.

Medicare Part A & B Premium Changes

Part A is free for most people – so if you or your spouse worked at least 10 years and paid Medicare taxes, it's free for you. If you don't qualify for premium-free Part A, you can buy it. Each month, you'll pay a premium of either:

- **\$311** (if you paid Medicare taxes 30-39 work quarters)
- **\$565** (if you paid Medicare taxes for 30 or fewer work quarters)

The standard monthly **Part B** premium for 2026 is **\$202.90**. It may be higher depending on your income.

Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Program Changes

There's an annual cap of **\$2,100** out-of-pocket maximum expenses on covered medications for people enrolled in a Medicare **Part D** Prescription Drug Plan or a Medicare Advantage Plan with drug coverage.

Medicare Savings Programs

Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs) are a type of Medicaid available to qualified Medicare beneficiaries. MSPs can help with premium costs, copayments, deductibles, and coinsurance. There are no asset tests for the MSPs – they're based on your income only.

Extra Help/Part D Low-Income Subsidy (LIS) Program

Extra Help – also known as **Part D Low-Income Subsidy (LIS)** – is a federal program that helps pay for some to most of the out-of-pocket costs of Medicare prescription drug coverage for qualified beneficiaries. It can lower or eliminate Part D premiums, reduce prescription drug costs, and remove late enrollment penalties.

- In 2026, you may qualify if your monthly income is up to \$2,015 (\$2,725 for couples) and assets are below certain limits – though some income and assets don't count.
- People enrolled in Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or a Medicare Savings Program (MSP) automatically qualify and don't need to apply.
- Extra Help provides a monthly Special Enrollment Period to enroll in or change your standalone Part D plan (and additional options for people with Medicaid).
- You must still enroll in a Part D plan to receive Extra Help benefits. If you don't choose one, you're usually auto-enrolled.
- If you have retiree or other drug coverage, it's important to compare options carefully before enrolling in Part D and Extra Help.

Want to see if you qualify for MSPs or Extra Help? Our SHIBA volunteers are here to help! Leave a message at Solid Ground's SHIBA intake line at **206.753.4806** or email shiba@solid-ground.org to get connected with a SHIBA volunteer for a phone or email consultation. You can also visit our website to see locations for in-person appointments: solid-ground.org/medicare-info/#consultations.

What Are RSVP Ambassadors?

They're RSVP volunteers willing to help us spread the word about the benefits of volunteering! Because of our small staff, we have a wonderful group of volunteers who help us share RSVP's mission with other seniors. If you're willing to represent RSVP at King County events, we'd like to talk to you. You'll share your experiences and enthusiasm for volunteering, and encourage others to join RSVP. We provide a fun, interactive training!

Send Us Your Hours!

Your RSVP volunteer hours are important! Hours are tied to federal funding with benefits provided to you, and they help our volunteer sites and RSVP reach volunteer hour goals. And importantly, they help us recognize you for your service and the contributions you make to meet community needs when you volunteer.



SITE PARTNER & PROGRAM APPRECIATIONS

Hopelink

Joyce Larson has been a solid Hopelink volunteer for the past three years. She consistently shows up on time with a smile for her role as a check-in volunteer, knows many of our clients, and efficiently checks them in. When there's downtime, Joyce is always available to help in the market by restocking the produce and shelves. Her help is deeply appreciated. Thank you, Joyce, for all of your time, help, and dedication to supporting food security in the Snoqualmie Valley.

~Maple Weinberg, Supervisor, Hopelink

Kokoro Kai

Lillian Hayashi started volunteering in 2011. Wow, this is her 15th year! She always treats people, especially our participants, with great hospitality. I remember when our adult day program, Kokoro Kai, opened after the pandemic, and she was willing to help with it. We appreciate how she dedicates herself to Kokoro Kai, always putting us first no matter how busy. We're so lucky to have her as our volunteer!

~Tomoko Faasumalie, Adult Day Program Director, Kokoro Kai

Knit-It-Alls

A big thank you to all RSVP volunteers who contributed to last year's **Knit-It-Alls Campaign!** In 2025, Solid Ground received 1,540 hand-knitted, crocheted, and sewn pieces of clothing made by over 40 volunteers who dedicated well over 4,000 hours to the project. Thanks to their efforts, we were able to gift the items to Solid Ground's Broadview residents and Regional Access Point (RAP) program, as well as seven community organizations – FamilyWorks, Full Life Care, KidVantage, Jewish Family Service, North Helpline, Queen Anne Helpline, and University Heights Center – to help our neighbors keep warm this winter.

Our partner organizations had high praise to offer. North Helpline's Kerry O'Meara said, "Besides offering warmth, these beautifully knitted items also offer the dignity of choice. Not all free stuff has to come in drab colors like black or grey. I see people's eyes light up when they see all the different designs and colors and happily pick out their favorite ones."

Cara Lauer, Executive Director of Queen Anne Helpline, said, "We envision engaged communities that honor human dignity, value belonging, and embrace interdependence. Rather than offering 'good enough' clothing, food, and other resources, we offer high-quality supplies and a loving environment. Nothing conveys a loving environment like a hand-knit gift that provides warmth for the spirit as well as the body." Thank you for anything you've contributed to this annual tradition. It's a labor of love.

~Amy Davis, Volunteer Coordinator, Solid Ground



Eric Matza displays 2025 knitted items (photo by Rachael Green).

Youth Tutoring Program (YTP)

YTP volunteer tutors serve their communities by making tutoring readily accessible to low-income families.

All children should have access to education, yet economic class, race, and sex – along with various other factors – are all pivotal in determining what educational opportunities are available. Access to academic tutors, who can aid with homework, subject comprehension, and standardized test preparation, is often limited only to those affluent enough to afford them.

Our service model pairs tutors 1:1 with the same scholar throughout the year to facilitate tutors becoming mentors and role models. Depending on each tutor's abilities and scholars' needs, tutors are matched with a 1st-12th grader to assist them with homework and skill building in math, reading, writing, and more.

The consistent nature of these pairings enables tutors to ascertain productive methods to engage their scholar and identify knowledge gaps to be addressed. Tutors can act as inspirational figures and illuminate novel career opportunities their scholars wouldn't otherwise be aware of.

YTP is proud to work in partnership with RSVP to provide volunteer opportunities to those willing to donate their time and talents. **RSVP volunteers** have reliably demonstrated themselves to be dependable,

accomplished, and skilled in their interactions with our scholars.

We've been fortunate to retain some RSVP referrals for several years and have received positive feedback from their scholars' families. They've been proactive, helping center supervisors keep sites organized, participating in events outside of regular programming hours, and occasionally donating supplies.

Volunteers are a fundamental part of YTP's service model. Without their support, we'd be unable to offer the services we do at our current capacity. YTP is grateful for our continuing partnership with RSVP. We're hopeful that together we can strive to ensure all children have access to tutors, regardless of their background.

~Oliver Lindseth, Operations & Volunteer Coordinator II, YTP

SHIBA (Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors)

Although 2025 has been a tumultuous year, our **SHIBA volunteers** weathered every storm to ensure their clients received the Medicare support they needed. Change is nothing new for this team – many have been with SHIBA for more than a decade – but they continue to navigate uncertainty with patience, compassion, and grace. They're truly called to do this work, and it shows in their persistence, passion, and constant desire to learn.

Our small but mighty group of 25 volunteers helped 4,136 people in 2025 with Medicare enrollment, Medicare Savings Programs, fraud prevention, plan comparisons, and more. Altogether, they contributed 7,304 hours of service.

A few team members moved on to new adventures, but those staying will help train the next cohort of SHIBA volunteers we hope to onboard this year.

I've only been part of the SHIBA team for a little over half a year, but I'm genuinely grateful to work alongside such a dedicated group. I may never reach the point of discussing complex Medicare cases for hours on end, but I already feel fulfilled supporting this work from behind the scenes.

Thank you, SHIBA volunteers! I'm looking forward to another year of helping people access the healthcare they need.

~Carol-Ann Smith, SHIBA Program Lead

Full Life Care

At Full Life Care, we rely on volunteers to connect with isolated older adults through our ElderFriends Volunteer Companionship Program. Volunteers also relieve stress and burnout among unpaid family caregivers through our Care Teams Program, which receives funding from the King County Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy.

We appreciate all 96 volunteers matched in our programs, but we're especially grateful for RSVP volunteers' life experience, insight, and willingness. The peer connection they offer is truly invaluable.

In particular, we thank RSVP volunteer **Eve Perara** for joining Care Teams' inaugural training in 2022. She surpassed her original one-year commitment to support one of the first caregiver clients and her husband for four years (and counting)! Eve's calm demeanor, patience, and positive attitude make such a positive impact. During her regular visits with the couple, Eve goes for walks and outings with the care recipient, giving his caregiver free time.

We also thank RSVP volunteer **Ryan Chamberlin** for his friendly attitude and respectful consideration, maintaining consistent one-on-one phone calls and friendly visits with an ElderFriend since their match in the fall of 2025. We're grateful that Ryan can relate to his ElderFriend through similar work and travel experiences, in addition to their common interest in sports. Ryan's positive contributions are reflected in his ElderFriend's reports that the friendship is uplifting and supportive.

Volunteers like Eve and Ryan offer the most valuable resource of time, along with often overlooked skills of connection and presence, to make a tangible impact to combat social isolation in our community.

~Jessica Chin, Volunteer Programs Supervisor, Full Life Care

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 Ann Pelayre at **206.694.6786** – or visit our website at **solid-ground.org/RSVP** for volunteer opportunity listings organized by region.

Auburn Community Food Bank is a volunteer-directed organization that provides food, referrals, and emergency assistance to people in need. Lend a hand and help others access food! Volunteer opportunities include: Counter person, door person, bagger, vegetable/bread attendant, van helper (i.e., loading and unloading food donations), and administrative assistant/bookkeeper. ~South King County

Catholic Community Services' Volunteer Services 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 & via phone

NEW! CIRC is a nonprofit organization that brings resident services to seniors living in affordable housing. We provide onsite resource navigation and referrals as well as global programming. We currently have volunteer opportunities for Digital Navigators to assist residents with digital literacy. Training is provided. Must be comfortable with customer service and using technology. ~Central & North Seattle, South King County

Family Law CASA provides free child advocacy services to shed light on intricate family dynamics in high-conflict custody cases. Advocates gather information and make recommendations to the court about what's in a child's best interests. Each advocate is assigned a staff supervisor, who guides and supports them. No specific experience is required. ~Countywide

FareStart believes everyone is entitled to fresh, healthy, and nutritious food. We have over 30 years of history and expertise in preparing and delivering meals across the Greater Seattle area, producing 19 million meals for various local organizations. Volunteers can lend a hand in a variety of ways, including providing kitchen support for our prepared meals programs. ~Central Seattle

Franciscan Hospice & Palliative Care (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, and affirming every life. ~Seattle & via phone

Full Life Care welcomes your support to uplift seniors and adults with disabilities. Craft holiday cards, organize supplies, lead group activities, or offer social, emotional, and practical support to an isolated senior or unpaid family caregiver. Serve at their Beacon Hill headquarters or via in-home friendly companionship visits at self-scheduled, flexible times. ~Countywide, South Seattle & South King County preferred

Jewish Family Service Seattle supports the needs of Jewish individuals and families, refugees and immigrants, and our broader community to achieve wellbeing, health, and stability. We offer a variety of social service programs across the Puget Sound region. Our volunteer opportunities support food access, older adults, refugee and immigrant concerns, and more! ~Central Seattle, North & East King County

Kokoro Kai Adult Day Center provides health and related services in a traditional atmosphere to primarily Japanese American families in the Pacific Northwest. Like to talk? Play games? Join us to assist with companionship and activities; seniors will appreciate your warmth and company. If you speak any Asian languages, it's a plus but not a requirement. ~International District, Seattle

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

North Helpline believes that all people deserve adequate food, housing, and respect. We assist our neighbors in obtaining basic needs that affirm their human dignity and worth. Our various volunteer roles include food bank operations such as in-person food distribution, home delivery box packing, and freight sorting, as well as client services roles such as registration, greeter, and check-in. Accommodations can be made if you're unable to stand for extended periods of time or lift more than 15 lbs. Driving roles with our Grocery Rescue and Home Delivery programs are available on request. ~North Seattle

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

Power of One Volunteer Program works to match volunteers with opportunities in the Shoreline Public Schools PreK-12. Volunteers commit to one hour per week on a regular basis throughout the school year. Under a teacher's direction, volunteers work with students to support academic success and/or social skills. Join Power of One and see the difference you can make in a student's life! ~North Seattle, North & East King County

Providence ElderPlace, a health insurance and care provider, is a Program of All-Inclusive Care of the Elderly (PACE). We provide seamless total care for vulnerable elders with compassion and dignity. Volunteers support staff as we assist elders, offer social enrichment activities, and foster a sense of belonging and care to help make their lives easier. Volunteers provide companionship and a chance for those we serve to socialize in a group or one-on-one setting that best fits volunteers' schedules. Medical screening is necessary, and training is provided. Spanish-speaking skills are a plus! ~Countywide

Valley Medical Center volunteers are the heart of our community, bringing care, compassion, and support to patients, families, and staff. From welcoming visitors at information desks and providing shuttle rides to assisting in our new Cancer Center, their dedication touches countless lives. Be part of our team and share your heart! ~South King County

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 experience and 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 afterschool tutors interested in helping guide youth on their educational journeys. We ask for a minimum of one hour/week of in-person tutoring at one of our five centers. ~North & South Seattle

YES! I want to get involved with RSVP.

Name: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

Address: _____

I'd like more information. Please...

- Call me to help me find volunteer opportunities just right for me.
- Email me information about RSVP.
- Note my new address.

Clip & mail this form to: RSVP, 1501 N 45th St, Seattle, WA 98103