Experience in Action!

King County RSVP's news for people 55 & older

Volume 41 | Issue 3 | Fall 2026

AmeriCorps Seniors | solid ground

Keiro Northwest's Kokoro Kai:

Creating culturally relevant community for Japanese elders

By Becky Rosenberg

What a delightful way to spend the afternoon! When I contacted Tomoko Faasuamalie, Kokoro Kai Adult Day Program Director, about featuring the program for RSVP, she invited me to join them for lunch and afternoon activities.

A program of Keiro Northwest, Kokoro Kai is housed in Nikkei Manor in the International District, a short walk from the light rail station.

The day program is Mondays and Wednesdays from 10am to 2:30pm. Tomoko writes that it "was launched in 1978, primarily for Japanese American seniors."

The morning activities consist of tea, games, and exercise – with more of each after lunch.

When I arrived, Tomoko introduced me to two of their program participants, Tomi and Sue, who I sat with for lunch.

Tomi was born in the US, but spent ages 2 through 9, including the World War II years, in Japan. When she returned to the U.S., she attended Garfield High School and has lived here ever since. Over the two years she's attended, Tomi has enjoyed the companionship that Kokoro Kai offers.

Sue is from Hawaii and followed her daughter to Seattle.



Tomoko (middle) and Kokoro Kai members with their songbooks – a joyful tradition!

Day program participants are about half U.S.- and half Japan-born. They were able to share their own and others' histories with me, reflecting the relationships that develop among regular participants.

Lunch was prepared by the kitchen that serves the Nikkei Manor residence. It featured a variety of Japanese style dishes, including egg flower soup, chicken with rice, pickled cucumber, and carrot salad – a delicious and hearty lunch.

Once lunch concluded and the plates were cleared away, it was time for "brain exercises" – in this case, card games guided by staff and volunteers. We played Rummikub and Blackjack, and most everyone (including me) had a winning hand at least once. Throughout the afternoon there was a great deal of chatter and laughter.

Tomoko led the games at my table. She's been with the program since 2012, clearly knows the program participants, and is positive and sensitive with them. This day, she was joined by several staff and volunteers. On a typical day, there are five volunteers and three staff.

Richard is a volunteer who retired from a career in software development and went looking for something quite different. He found a variety of options, including Kokoro Kai, where he's now volunteered since 2005. He's upbeat, funny, and clearly takes immense pleasure in his role.

Maya – originally from Japan, where she visits twice a year – has been part of the staff for 16 years.

Clearly the length of their service provides an indication of the satisfaction they take from the work. Their ease of interaction with participants reflects their genuine interest and concern.

We all know the benefits of a well-designed senior program like Kokoro Kai. Research comparing nonparticipants to participants demonstrates better physical and mental health and greater social interactions among participants. Supporting those benefits requires a range and routine of activities.

Tomoko identified the "four foundational dimensions of holistic senior care [as] '**PIES**' (**P**hysical, **I**ntellectual, **E**motional, and **S**ocial) to ensure that … participants maintain their mobility, cognitive sharpness, emotional wellbeing, and community connections."

Afternoon activities included a great deal of singing with piano accompaniment. Copies of their songbook, which include Japanese and English songs, were handed out.

In addition, a local volunteer chorus, the Rainbow Singers, visited and sang. I got to hear "Do Re Mi" in Japanese and joined in on "Hamabe No Uta" ("Song of Hamabe Beach"), which I'd learned in a chorale.

Participants also participated in physical exercise, which was part of both morning and afternoon activities. Those who could stand for the exercises did so while others stayed seated, but everyone was engaged and encouraged to

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

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Speaking Directly

By Ann Pelayre, RSVP Coordinator

Personal traditions

What comes to mind when you hear the word "traditions?" Maybe it's the holidays, an anniversary, or a birthday. Or maybe it's something smaller and more personal.

For me, thinking about traditions takes me right back to childhood summers spent camping with my family. I remember backyard barbecues, big family gatherings, and my parents, aunts, and uncles playing mahjong until the wee hours of the morning. I remember long road trips to California to visit cousins, with stops at Disneyland, Knott's Berry Farm, and Universal Studios along the way.

Thinking about those days still brings me so much joy: the laughter, the closeness, and the feeling of being surrounded by family. But there's sadness there, too, because my mom was part of every one of those memories. She passed away 16 years ago, and some days it still feels like yesterday. I think about her all the time, and events like her birthday and Mother's Day can be especially hard.

Without my mom, special occasions didn't feel the same, and it took a long time to see why. I didn't want them to be filled only with sadness. I wanted to smile but my heart felt emptiness. I wanted to remember the good times and the things she loved.

So one day, I decided that whenever one of those meaningful dates comes around, I'll do something she'd enjoy. That's how I started creating my personal traditions.

I started small. I paid attention to what brought me comfort and thought about my mom's favorite foods and activities. I eventually realized that I didn't need a big plan. Often, the simplest rituals are the ones that mean the most.

I also had to give myself permission to feel whatever came up, because this was still part of grieving. In the beginning, some moments felt heavy. But as I continued practicing and building my personal traditions, the hard moments slowly began to feel just a little bit lighter. I wasn't just grieving my mom anymore, I was celebrating her.

My mom loved seafood – all kinds of seafood – and she was an amazing cook. When I was growing up, I never had the patience to shell crab or peel shrimp, so she always did it for me. She would do it so fast, and before I knew it, it was on my plate. I guess you can say I was spoiled!



Ann with her mom, all dressed up

One day, I decided I wanted to do this as a tradition. So I bought a whole Dungeness crab and shelled it myself. It sounds like such a small thing, but I was so proud. I could almost imagine my mom looking at me in surprise, smirking because she knew I didn't enjoy getting my hands dirty – but also because I loved that she did it for me. I smiled and burst into laughter because, in that simple moment, I felt close to her again.



A family collage of photos including Ann's mom

For my most recent birthday, I celebrated with her by doing something we both loved. (For this personal tradition, I'll keep it close to my heart.)

There's something comforting about tradition. When we can't find the right words, a simple action can say what's in our hearts. Life moves so quickly. We rush from one season to the next, cross dates off the calendar, and suddenly another year has passed.

My personal traditions give me a reason to slow down. They help me feel connected and grounded in the present. There's no need for a crowd, a big budget, or a formal invitation.

A personal tradition can be as simple as making a quiet promise to honor one meaningful moment. For me, it creates a bridge between the past – where so many beautiful memories live – and the present, where life is still unfolding. It reminds my heart that it's okay to remember and gives my grief a soft place to land.

As we get older, our memories become some of our greatest treasures. I've learned that honoring someone who has passed isn't about holding tightly to sorrow, as I did for many years. It's about being grateful for the incredible gift of having loved them at all. When we make a small, meaningful space for remembrance, we carry a little piece of them with us into the life we're living now.

So today, take a gentle breath and think of someone you miss. What was something they loved? Is there one small, quiet thing you could do this week to feel close and connected to them again? It doesn't have to be anything "big." Let it be something simple and meaningful to you, something that honors them and brings a little peace to your heart. ●



Gear up now for the winter cold

All year long, Knit-It-Alls volunteers knit, crochet, and sew warm clothing and blankets for people who need them during the winter. They...

- Create a range of cozy hats, scarves, and mittens, including baby and children's clothing.
- Count, tag, and sort donations.

This winter, we'll distribute thousands of items to people we serve and other nonprofits to pass out to their participants. Join the Knit-It-Alls team to contribute new, cozy, handmade items. For more information, contact us at **206.694.6825** or **volunteers@solid-ground.org**.

Attention all RSVP Volunteers!

If you haven't received your welcome to AmeriCorps Seniors long-sleeved T-shirt, contact us at **rsvp@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 at **solid-ground.org/rsvp-registration-form**!





It Seems to Me...

By Peter Langmaid



Traditions & connections

Forty-three years ago, I married the love of my life, who happens to be Jewish. Though not religious, my wife connects with her Jewishness through traditions and connections.

We celebrate four major Jewish holidays. I look forward to it all, but my two favorites are **Passover** and **Chanukah**, which we've celebrated with friends for years.

PASSOVER commemorates the exodus of the Jewish people from Egypt, and its centerpiece is the reading of the Haggadah, the story of that journey.

Our Haggadah, written by my wife and updated annually, is a nontraditional celebration of the struggle for all people living under oppression, past and present.

There's a core group of people we celebrate Passover with, but we invite others each year (both Jews and non-Jews) to celebrate with us.

The reading of the Haggadah is shared by all, with each person at the table reading a portion. Much discussion accompanies it. For me, the Haggadah reading is an inspiring reminder that freedom for all is an aspirational goal for all humanity.

After the reading, the real show begins: Food! To quote a line from the Haggadah, "Jews love to eat." Starting with world-class matzah ball soup and culminating with my wife's savory baked chicken with apricots, each longtime participant brings a traditional dish to the table.

Stuffed, we sit around after dinner while the Jewish participants recount Passover traditions they grew up with. Nourished emotionally and sated physically with wonderful food, the evening ends with vows to do more for the suffering around the world and hopes for an invitation to next year's Passover.

CHANUKAH lasts eight nights, with each night featuring a progressive candle-lighting ceremony that accompanies brief prayers, which most participants struggle to remember.

The candleholder is called the Menorah. Each family at our Chanukah party brings their own Menorah, passed down to them through generations.

Following the candlelighting, we sit down to a feast highlighted by fried potato pancakes called latkes. Most people start with two, but they always come back for more.

After dinner, we head for the living room, and the much-anticipated game begins. Each attendee brings a colorfully wrapped gift. Gifts can be no more expensive than $20. The most coveted gifts, especially with the adults, are chocolates.

Each person picks a number from a hat – then the fun begins. Gifts are coveted, traded, stolen, and frozen, all to great hilarity, until all gifts are opened and all transactions completed. There's much good-natured bargaining and strategizing within families. When it's over, some go home happy, others slightly disappointed, but all vow to do better next year.

For over 30 years, we've been celebrating Chanukah with two other families we connected with through our children's elementary school friends. Our children are all grown up now and scattered around the country with families of their own, but our three families stubbornly refuse to let the Chanukah party and gift exchange become just a dusty memory.

So as the years fly by, our lives become increasingly busy. Children grow up. Jobs change. Friends move. New responsibilities intrude. It would be easy to let old friendships fade into the past – but traditions have a stubborn way of surviving.

For decades, traditions have given us reasons to put everything else aside for an evening and come together. We share a bountiful feast, update each other on what's happened in our lives, gossip, reminisce, and laugh. ●

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

Kokoro Kai *continued from page 1*

complete the series of upper and lower body movements. And there was celebration! I was there on the last day of the month, the day all of that month's birthdays are acknowledged. The family of one of the three celebrants in their 90s provided the cake, and everyone serenaded them and ate.

To sum up the day of my visit, the **P**hysical of **PIES** was met by at least two exercise periods, **I**ntellectual was addressed with card games, **E**motional was integrated in a culturally familiar and meaningful environment, and **S**ocial was part of what happened all day long as small groups ate, sang, played, and laughed together.

Tomoko emphasized that all of this is only possible because of the work of volunteers. She says, "It is their genuine dedication that allows us to provide such a wonderful environment."

Volunteers are generally "regulars" who come for a set weekly period, a day or half day during the 10am to 2:30pm schedule. Japanese language is not an expectation of volunteers, but Tomoko says, "It would be ideal if they are interested in Japanese culture."

If my experience is any indication, Kokoro Kai is an exceptionally gratifying volunteer site. ●

What are RSVP Ambassadors?

They're RSVP volunteers willing to help us spread the word about the benefits of volunteering at 55+! 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 hours goals. And importantly, they help us recognize you for your service and the contributions you make to meet community needs when you volunteer.

Questions? Please contact RSVP: 206.694.6786 | rsvp@solid-ground.org

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 among people 55 and older in King County.

solid ground

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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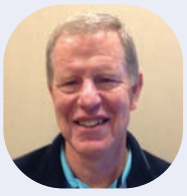
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Financial Planning

By Bill Pharr

Make financial health a tradition

Each fall, everyone should take the time to perform a review of their overall financial situation. Personally, I like to pick the same date every year to make it easier to remember. Dates like Labor Day, a birthday, and Thanksgiving work for me.

Everyone's financial situation is different, so keep that in mind when reviewing the year-end financial tasks below. Many of them can go much better if you work with your Certified Public Accountant (CPA), Financial Advisor, Financial Planner, or any trusted person.

Key tasks

1) If you work on a budget for the year, review how you're doing.

2) If you've never made a budget, you might think about starting one for next year.

3) Review your emergency savings and verify whether or not the balance is where you want it to be.

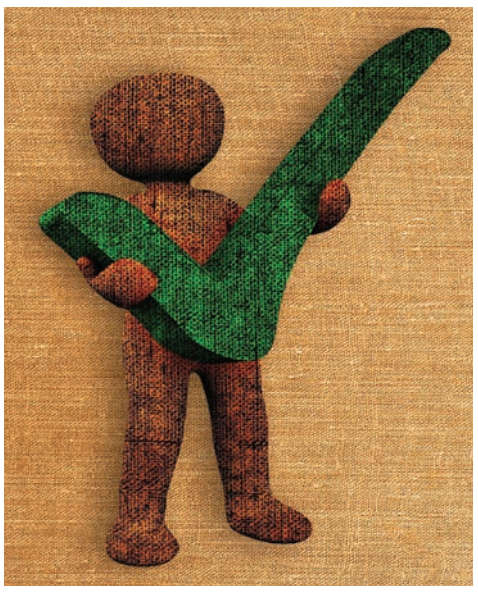
4) If you're self-employed, see if it's possible to defer income into next year.

5) Organize your tax documents for the upcoming filing season, and contact your CPA promptly with any questions.

6) Review insurance coverage (e.g., auto, home, apartment) to make sure the amounts are where you want them to be. Ask yourself where they should be, given how expensive everything is today.

7) A major task each year is to check your health insurance – whichever plan(s) you're on – as it applies to your general health situation.

8) Check to make sure that your will, power(s) of attorney, and healthcare directives are all current and up to date.



Retirement

1) Have you contributed as much as you can to your retirement accounts this year?

2) Can you increase your contributions to any of your retirement accounts?

3) Have you planned to take, or have already taken, your required minimum distribution(s)?

4) Have you researched to find out if you're eligible for a Roth conversion? If yes, does it make sense?

5) Have you checked your retirement account beneficiaries?

Investment review

1) If you have a Financial Advisor, set up a meeting to review investment performance in nonretirement and retirement accounts.

2) Review performance of individual investments.

3) Rebalance your investments.

4) Are there any individual investments in taxable accounts eligible to take a tax loss by selling?

Charitable donations & giving

1) Do you have organizations you want to give money or donate stock to?

2) Work with your CPA on potential tax benefits of charitable gifting. You can gift up to $19,000 per year, per individual, tax free!

3) Donating through a Donor Advised Fund (DAF) offers additional tax advantages.

4) Are there grandkids who might benefit from a contribution to a 529 Plan?

Hopefully, you find this list helpful and can use it to customize your own year-end tradition of reviewing your financial situation. Good luck! ●

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

FALL RECIPE: Apple Pockets *Source: Adapted from Honest Pretzels by Molly Katzen*

Prep time: 45 minutes | Rise time: 1 hour | Cook time: 20 minutes | Total time: 2 hours | Servings: 12

INGREDIENTS

Dough

- 1¼ cup lukewarm water
- 1 tsp active dry yeast
- 1 Tbsp sugar
- 2 Tbsp butter
- 3 cups all-purpose flour
- 1¼ tsp salt

Filling

- 1 Tbsp cornstarch
- 1/3 cup sugar
- ½ tsp cinnamon
- 4 large tart apples
- Flour as needed (for handling dough)
- 2 Tbsp butter
- Water (for spritzing)

DIRECTIONS

Dough

- Measure water into a medium bowl. Sprinkle yeast and sugar into water. Let stand 3-5 minutes until you see foamy bubbles.
- Melt butter. Measure out 1 Tbsp of melted butter and add to water. Put remaining butter in a new medium bowl and brush it around.
- Add salt and 1 cup flour to water. Beat with a whisk. Slowly add remaining flour. Mix with a wooden spoon, then with floured hands, until dough comes together.
- Sprinkle flour onto your work area. Take dough out of the bowl and put it on the floured work area. Put some flour on your hands and knead for 5 minutes.
- Put dough ball into buttered bowl. Swish dough around, turn upside down, then put back in bowl. Cover bowl with a clean towel and let dough rest for 1 hour.

Filling

- Preheat oven to 400°F and line two pans with parchment paper.
- Add cornstarch, sugar, and cinnamon to a small bowl. Mix well.
- Peel and quarter 4 apples. Cut out core of each quarter, slice thinly, and put into a medium bowl.
- Sprinkle cornstarch mixture into the bowl and mix gently with a wooden spoon until apple slices are completely coated. Set aside.

MAKING THE APPLE POCKETS

1) Sprinkle a little flour onto your work area. Cut the dough into 12 equal parts. Form each part into a ball.

2) Roll the dough balls into 5-inch-wide circles.

3) Melt the butter and brush some onto each dough circle. Put about ¼ cup apple mixture onto one side of each circle. Leave an edge of dough showing and fold over the other side of the circle. Press the edges tightly closed with the back of a fork.

4) Put the pockets on a baking tray, lightly spray them with water, then sprinkle a pinch of sugar on top of each.

5) Bake for 15-20 minutes.



Photo credit: Krusteaz website

2026 AmeriCorps Seniors Nationwide Celebration

By Ann Pelayre, RSVP Coordinator

On September 15, 2026, for the first time ever, AmeriCorps Seniors projects across the country united for a single, coordinated moment of celebration in a live broadcast. The 2026 AmeriCorps Seniors Nationwide Celebration marked a new tradition – one that elevates the voices, stories, and impact of volunteers from the Foster Grandparent, RSVP, Senior Companion, and Senior Demonstration programs.

The Nationwide Celebration gave every AmeriCorps Seniors project an opportunity to come together on the same day to recognize the dedication, creativity, and impact of both volunteers and project staff.

Local gatherings featured America-themed décor, history walls, photo displays, and storytelling moments that reflect each project's unique identity. While each celebration looked different, they all shared the same purpose of honoring the people who make service possible: those who give their time, coordinate the work, and support volunteers behind the scenes.

This shared moment also connected AmeriCorps Seniors to "America250," the nation's commemoration of the United States' 250th anniversary. As communities reflect on the country's history and civic spirit, AmeriCorps Seniors proudly lift up the volunteers and staff whose service strengthens neighborhoods every day.

By participating in the Nationwide Celebration, each project became part of the America250 anniversary year – showing how today's acts of service continue a long American tradition of community, connection, and collective impact.

During the broadcast, we were given a special opportunity to break into groups and participate in a local activity. Ours was called "The Ripple Effect," where our group of RSVP volunteers shared responses to one of two statements: "I choose to volunteer because …" and "One small positive change I want to see in our community is …"

RSVP volunteers in attendance shared meaningful stories of purpose, connection, and community care that touched our hearts and reminded us of our shared commitment to service. After each volunteer shared their story, they were handed a puzzle piece to print their name on the back of.



At the end of sharing their stories and experiences, the volunteers gathered around a table and put their puzzle pieces together. Once all pieces were connected, the puzzle picture depicted a wave.

This symbolized how each volunteer's unique motivation, care, dedication, and commitment creates a ripple – and together, the individual actions build a powerful wave of impact! ●



RSVP volunteers and staff had a great time at the AmeriCorps Seniors event!

Scan these QR codes to watch the nationwide broadcast recording or slideshow featured during the celebration:

BROADCAST **SLIDESHOW**

A special thank you

We're so proud of the incredible work our RSVP volunteers do every single day! They're the heart and soul of our communities, showing up day in and day out with unmatched compassion, resilience, and energy. Whether they're lending a helping hand at community events, organizing supplies behind the scenes, providing companionship, or tutoring, their dedication knows no bounds. They choose to show up because they care deeply about making a difference, and we simply couldn't do this vital work without them.

~With endless gratitude and appreciation for each of you, sincerely, your RSVP Project Team

FALL RECIPE: Pumpkin Champurrado *Sources: Farm to Preschool & Serious Eats*

Prep time: 15 minutes | Cook time: 10 minutes | Total time: 25 minutes | Servings: 8 – 12



Photo credit: Serious Eats website

INGREDIENTS

- ¾ cup brown sugar
- 1½ cup unsweetened milk of choice
- ½ cup pumpkin purée
- 3 oz unsweetened chocolate
- ½ cup instant masa harina (tortilla flour)
- 2 tsp ground cinnamon
- 1½ tsp ground ginger
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- Pinch of ground cloves (optional)
- 3½ cups water
- 1 tsp kosher salt

DIRECTIONS

- Measure brown sugar, milk, and pumpkin purée into a medium bowl. Break or chop unsweetened chocolate into small pieces and add to bowl.
- Measure masa harina, cinnamon, ground ginger, nutmeg, cloves, and water into a pot and whisk until smooth. Place over medium heat and bring mixture to a boil, then reduce heat to low. Cook while whisking for 1 minute.
- Add unsweetened chocolate, brown sugar, milk, and pumpkin purée mixture to pot. Whisk over low heat until well blended. Remove from heat.
- Add more sugar or milk to adjust sweetness or beverage thickness. Cool before serving.

Medicare Open Enrollment is underway!

Have you reviewed your coverage yet? *By Carol-Ann Smith, SHIBA Program Lead*

The Medicare Open Enrollment Period (OEP) is happening now and continues through December 7. This is the annual opportunity for people already enrolled in Medicare to review their coverage and make changes for the coming year. Any changes made during Open Enrollment will take effect on January 1, 2027. Even if you're happy with your current plan, it's important to review your options each year. Premiums, formularies, provider networks, and benefits can change, and you may find coverage that better meets your needs or saves you money.

4 Ways to navigate Medicare Open Enrollment

1) **Review your Annual Notice of Change (ANOC).** You should have already received an ANOC outlining any changes for 2027, including premium, cost-sharing, or prescription drug coverage updates. Review these changes carefully to determine whether your current plan will continue to meet your needs
2) **Review your Medicare & You 2027 handbook.** Medicare households receive an updated handbook each fall with information about Medicare coverage, available plans, and answers to frequently asked questions. You can also access it online at **medicare.gov/medicare-and-you**.
3) **Compare plans.** Even if you're satisfied with your current coverage, comparing available options can help you identify plans with lower costs, better benefits, or improved prescription drug coverage. Use Medicare's Plan Finder tool at **medicare.gov/plan-compare**.
4) **Pick up a Medicare OEP Jumpstart Toolkit.** The Washington State Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) offers toolkits to help Medicare beneficiaries prepare for counseling appointments or explore their options independently. Pick one up at your local library or order one online from **insurance.wa.gov/MedicareOEP**.

Medicare Open Enrollment presentations

Join us for one of our free, unbiased Medicare Open Enrollment presentations and learn about:

- What you can do during Medicare Open Enrollment.
- Choosing and changing plans.
- Medigap plan options.
- Programs that can help lower Medicare costs.

To view upcoming Medicare presentations, including events and workshops, visit **solid-ground.org/workshops/#medicare**.

Don't wait until December!

Medicare Open Enrollment ends December 7. Review your coverage early so you have time to compare plans, explore cost-saving programs, and get answers to your questions before the deadline. Take a few minutes now to help ensure you have the coverage that best fits your health and financial needs in 2027!

How to get Medicare help NOW

- Call **1.800.MEDICARE (1.800.633.4227)** for 24-hour assistance.
- Visit **medicare.gov** for plan comparisons and Medicare information.
- Visit **insurance.wa.gov/medicareOEP** for WA state OIC Open Enrollment resources and the OEP Jumpstart Toolkit.

Medicare cost-saving programs

As you review your coverage, it's also a good time to see whether you qualify for programs that can help reduce Medicare costs.

- **Medicare Savings Programs (MSPs)** help eligible Medicare beneficiaries pay premiums, deductibles, copayments, and coinsurance. These programs are based on income, and many people qualify without realizing it.
- **Extra Help (Low-Income Subsidy)** is a federal program that helps pay Medicare prescription drug costs. It can lower or eliminate Part D premiums, reduce out-of-pocket prescription expenses, and remove Part D late enrollment penalties. People enrolled in Medicaid, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), or an MSP automatically qualify.

SHIBA volunteers can also help determine whether you may be eligible for these programs and explain your options.

Free, year-round SHIBA help



SHIBA (Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors) is a volunteer program of WA state OIC that provides free, confidential, and unbiased Medicare counseling. In King County, SHIBA services are available through Solid Ground and the Chinese Information and Service Center (CISC). Please note that appointment availability is limited during the Medicare Open Enrollment Period, and wait times may be longer than usual.

Trained SHIBA volunteers can help you:

- Compare Medicare Advantage, Medigap, and Part D plans.
- Understand Medicare benefits and coverage options.
- Screen for MSPs and Extra Help.
- Answer Medicare-related questions.

To schedule assistance...

Solid Ground SHIBA: *One-to-one Medicare counseling is available by phone, email, and in person across King County.*

- **Phone or email:** Contact **206.753.4806** or **shiba@solid-ground.org** to schedule a virtual counseling appointment.
- **In person:** Visit **solid-ground.org/medicare-info/#consultations** to find an in-person counseling site and schedule an appointment.

CISC SHIBA *(for bilingual assistance)*

- **Chinese: 206.823.7842**
- **Russian/Ukrainian: 206.751.6651**
- **Vietnamese: 253.397.9946**

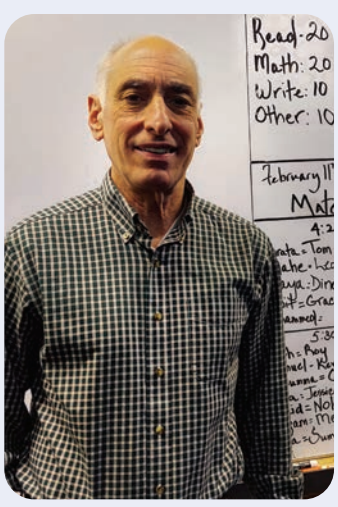
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SENIOR ON THE STREET: "Share a tradition!" *By Ann Pelayre, RSVP Coordinator*



Gloria Klein

"My family loves and always plays soccer, and we enjoy going to Sounders games."



Dino Delyani

"My geographically dispersed siblings and our mother started doing Zoom calls to talk during the pandemic. We still do this conference to get together on a weekly basis."



John & Joanne

"Joanne comes from a big family, and they've had a longstanding tradition of trying to bring everyone together once a year, either for Thanksgiving or an annual family reunion. If we find someone who'll be alone on Thanksgiving, we invite them as well – even if they aren't part of the immediate family."



Volunteer Spotlight

By Connie Standish, Reading Partners

MEET ERIC SMILEY: One student, one sentence, one session at a time

Eric Smiley has been a volunteer tutor for so long – and with so many organizations – that he can't quite remember when it all began. Decades ago, he guesses. He's fairly certain his first tutoring opportunity came from an ad on Craigslist. His thinking was simple: "Kids can always use more reading skills."

What started as a way to give back has become a deeply meaningful part of his life. After a career in accounting and actuarial roles, Eric now devotes the better part of four days a week to volunteering, helping young readers build their skills and confidence.

Eric is exactly the kind of dedicated volunteer who makes Reading Partners' work possible. Since 2014, Reading Partners Seattle has supported students in schools, libraries, and community centers, pairing young readers with trained volunteer tutors who help them develop the skills they need to thrive.

With only 31% of U.S. 4th graders performing at or above proficiency in reading in 2024, the need for individualized literacy support remains urgent.

But for Eric, tutoring is about much more than reading scores. It's about building relationships, one student at a time.

"Eric is always in a great mood and really inspires his students to learn," says Julie Thomson, a program coordinator at John Muir Elementary School in Seattle, "Eric has a knack for finding creative ways to connect with students and help them settle into each tutoring session."

At John Muir, he began asking one student to write his name and a sentence – any sentence at all – before starting their 45-minute lesson. The simple exercise became a familiar ritual, helping the student ease into each session while strengthening his writing skills. Within a few months, the student made noticeable progress.

"Reading and writing are so connected, I think," Eric reflects. Those small moments of connection are at the heart of tutoring for him. As tutors and students work together, share ideas, and build confidence, they develop



Eric with one of his regular tutees

relationships grounded in trust. And the learning often goes both ways. Eric is quick to point out how much he continues to learn from the young people he tutors.

Recently, while he and a student were examining a cocoon hanging from a tree, Eric mentioned that he didn't like moths because they ate his sweaters. His student promptly explained that this particular genus didn't eat clothes, so Eric's sweaters were safe!

On another occasion, while reviewing vocabulary, Eric asked a student to use the word "judge" in a sentence. Expecting an answer about a courtroom, he was surprised when the student replied, "You shouldn't judge people."

"They're already way ahead," Eric says, "I'm often surprised by how much they already know."

These moments of surprise and discovery are part of what keeps Eric coming back. His students bring their own knowledge, perspectives, humor, and insights into every session. Eric brings patience, creativity, encouragement, and a willingness to listen.

After decades of volunteering, Eric still considers it a privilege to spend his time with young readers. He isn't simply helping students discover what they can learn – he's helping them recognize what they already know and how much they're capable of achieving. Reading Partners is so grateful to Eric for sharing his time and talents with our students! ●

Join two of our site partners in their holiday traditions

CATHOLIC COMMUNITY SERVICES

Shoeboxes of Joy

Take part in a holiday tradition supported by Catholic Community Services (CCS). Each year, their Volunteer Services (VS) program staff and volunteers deliver holiday care packages to older adults and adults with disabilities living in King County neighborhoods – people who might be isolated from family and friends during the holiday season.

Shoeboxes of Joy is a holiday volunteer opportunity for individuals and groups to create brightly decorated shoeboxes containing holiday gifts. The joyful packages contain different types of goodies such as food and fun items, along with useful cleaning supplies and toiletries. Popular items include spice teas and flavored coffees, mixed nuts, small flashlights, playing cards, crossword puzzles, shaving cream, dishcloths, and gloves.

The boxes are put together and delivered to the CCS VS offices in Seattle, Kent, and Bellevue. Program coordinators then recruit volunteer elves to deliver the special packages to clients at their homes throughout the month of December. Shared smiles and joy are guaranteed!



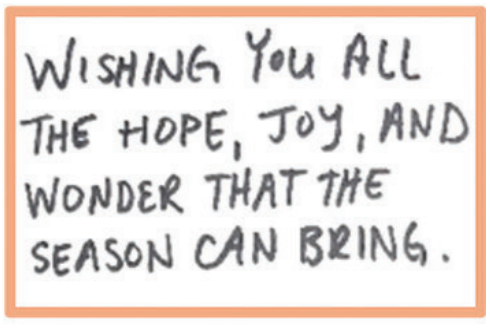
Want to create a Shoebox of Joy or help deliver them during the holiday season? Please email vc@ccsww.org for more information.

FULL LIFE CARE

Seasonal Greeting Cards

Sort and craft seasonal greeting cards for Full Life Care to uplift adults with disabilities and isolated seniors who may otherwise be alone for the holidays. You may serve remotely (using your own supplies to craft and donate cards) or in-person at their Beacon Hill headquarters.

Onsite, supplies will be provided to handmake cards, handwrite inspirational greetings, sort and organize cards and other supplies, and help with other behind-the-scenes tasks.



DROP-IN HOURS:

1625 S Columbian Way
Seattle, WA 98108

- Wed, 11/18 – 9:30am-1:30pm
- Wed, 11/25 – 3:45-5:45pm
- More December dates TBA

To learn more, please email rsvp@solid-ground.org.



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.

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. Help the same person each time or be listed "on call" to match your schedule and interests. You'll receive training, mileage reimbursement, and insurance. Give rides to medical appointments, do yardwork, be a phone buddy, or deliver groceries, medications, and/or meals. *~Countywide & via phone*

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. We provide training; you must be comfortable with customer service and using technology. *~Central & North Seattle, South King County*

Franciscan Hospice & Palliative Care work together as a team of professionals and volunteers to discover and meet the unique needs of patients at the end of their lives while supporting their families as well. We provide them with both practical and emotional support. Whether it's a private home, skilled nursing facility, adult family home, or the Franciscan Hospice House, we meet our patients where they are to offer both comfort and companionship. If you're interested in bringing joy to others, we'd love to hear from you. *~Central, North, South & West Seattle, South County*

Greenwood Senior Center, a program of the Phinney Neighborhood Association, is an inclusive community providing social, physical, and educational activities to meet the needs of older adults. We fight isolation, build camaraderie, and enrich each other's lives. We seek receptionists, memory loss support, and safe minivan drivers for events. *~North Seattle*

Hopelink needs your help to ensure all members of our community have access to food! Volunteer in Bellevue, Kirkland, Redmond, Carnation, Shoreline, or at one of our mobile sites. Our greatest need is weekday volunteers for our Food Markets (food banks), but we also have opportunities for remote volunteering through our English for Work program. *~North & East King County*

NEW! **Invest In Youth** partners with Seattle Public Schools to provide free, one-on-one tutoring to 3rd-5th graders at Title 1 elementary schools. Volunteer tutors are matched with one student from October to May, fostering both academic growth and confidence. In addition to strengthening core skills, our tutors offer something that research consistently shows matters most: the consistent presence of a caring adult who believes in their student's potential. *~Central, South & West Seattle*

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

Magnuson Park Community Food Pantry seeks volunteers to help provide food for the Sand Point Housing community. Volunteers help unload food deliveries, distribute food, keep stations well stocked, welcome patrons, provide information and direction, and assist staff with food bank breakdown and cleanup at the end of the afternoon. *~North Seattle*

Mt. Si Senior Center supports more than 1,300 older adults in the Snoqualmie Valley each year through nutritious meals, safe housing, reliable transportation, wellness programs, and community connection. Make a meaningful difference while feeling valued and appreciated through volunteer roles in food service, front desk support, fundraising, program leadership, and special events. *~East King County*

NEW! **North Seattle Food Connection (NSFC):** North Helpline and Hunger Intervention Program (HIP), two leading North Seattle nonprofits addressing food insecurity, have combined to form NSFC. Our two food banks in Seattle's Lake City and Bitter Lake neighborhoods feature food access, homelessness prevention, and client services volunteer opportunities. *~North Seattle*

Power of One Volunteer Program matches 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 witness the difference you can make in a student's life! *~North Seattle, North & East King Co.*

Providence ElderPlace is a care provider 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, and foster a sense of belonging and care to make their lives easier. Provide companionship in group or 1:1 socialization. Medical screening is required and training provided. Spanish-speaking skills are a plus! *~Countywide*

Reading Partners Seattle pairs community volunteers with elementary students for 1:1 reading tutoring. No teaching experience is needed – we provide the training, materials, and support you need. With just about one hour a week, you can build a meaningful connection with a student and help them develop reading skills that can make a difference for years to come. Tutors work with the same student every week. Become a Reading Partner and help a young reader thrive in South Seattle or Bellevue. *~South Seattle & East King County*

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!) and just as importantly, greeters to welcome folks to tax sites and multilingual interpreters to assist anyone who needs language help. This is a 13-week opportunity, from late January – mid-April, with an ask of one 4-hour shift/week. Training is offered in December and January. *~Countywide & online*

Valley Medical Center & Clinics seeks volunteers for our shuttle program and the Cancer Center's Wellbeing Support Center. Help guests safely get where they need to go, or connect patients and families with complimentary comfort items and resources. Join our welcoming community and make a difference every day! *~South King County*

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

Youth Tutoring Program (YTP) 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 a minimum of one hour/week of in-person tutoring at one of our five centers. *~North & South Seattle*

(See seasonal/holiday opportunities on p. 7!)

A FRIENDLY REMINDER ABOUT...
AmeriCorps Seniors Prohibited Activities

Due to federal grant regulations, RSVP volunteers may not perform the following activities as a part of their service:

- Give religious instruction, conduct worship services, or engage in proselytizing.
- Assist with electoral activities, voter registration, transportation to polls, or efforts to influence legislation.
- Engage in activities that displace paid workers.
- Accept money or donations from the people they serve or relatives and friends of service recipients.
- Endorse particular political candidates or participate in/support campaigns for public office.