



Students take part in a creative writing class at the Olympia Senior Center

Lifelong Learning, Lifelong Connections

Senior Academy Helps Seniors Explore New Interests While Fostering Friendship and Engagement

At Senior Services for South Sound, we believe it's never too late to learn something new. Our Senior Academy program has been proving this for more than a decade. With courses that dig deep into various academic topics, **Senior Academy promotes lifelong learning and the healthy benefits of an active mind.**

Numerous studies show that **engaging in academic activities can help improve cognitive health later in life.** Beyond keeping your brain sharp, learning brings people together. As longtime writing instructor Keith Eisner notes, Senior Academy isn't just about the topics and the work. It's also about the friendships that form, the shared laughter and the lively conversations that follow every class. When you're immersed in a topic you love alongside others who feel the same, isolation fades and connections grow.

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SENIOR ACADEMY

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“We laugh and we have a lot of fun, but we work hard too. Learning keeps the brains going!”

— Keith Eisner

According to a study by the National Institute on Aging, **social isolation can increase the risk of various health problems** including cardiac disease and cognitive decline. Another study found that social isolation has been associated with a 50% increased risk of dementia. The good news is that staying connected, especially through shared activities like learning, is a powerful way to combat loneliness and its devastating effects.

Every fall, winter and spring quarter, dedicated and knowledgeable instructors like Keith team up with us to share passions they’ve cultivated over decades. Recent classes have included explorations of the politics of regional rivalries in the United States; a look at Italian civilization from 1000 BC to 500 AD; and how expressive art processes can enhance self-awareness and cultivate improved quality of life.

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SUBARU

Olympia Subaru

Some instructors are published authors, others retired professors—some are both!—but all bring the same excitement to the table. **And they’re not immune to the healing effects the program offers its students**; they too come away with lasting friendships and new knowledge.

“You meet a lot of new people,” said Keith, “but sometimes you’ll meet some old folks that you knew before.”

Keith joked that his favorite part about teaching Senior Academy classes is that students “show up on time and I *rarely* have to tell them to put away their phones.” This was followed by a sheepish student putting her phone away accompanied by laughter from around the table.

But in all seriousness, Keith said that he loves working with senior students because of their life experiences.

“These folks have a lot of stories,” Keith said. “A lot of wonderful stories.”



Keith with his Beautiful Lies, Beautiful Truths writing class.

The Joy of Lifelong Learning

I'm thrilled that we are highlighting our Senior Academy classes in this issue, as I'm a firm believer in the importance of lifelong learning. **Does our education conclude in our youth when we leave school or graduate from college? Of course not!**

As you read about our educational offerings, consider how many ways you can learn, connect and play through Senior Services for South Sound! What I hope you also see is a mirror showing back a person who wants to remain actively engaged. Of **what good is a life spent without learning?** Even when our bodies are letting us down, there are so many more ways to learn and connect these days.

I'm known among my family and friends for being able to fix a lot of stuff. We haven't paid for a car to be repaired in decades. I can't claim our house or gardens are any show pieces, but neither are we paying to have them maintained, aside from roofs or big things like that. My wife says we live a much better lifestyle than our salaries afford because I'm able to fix so many things myself.

While I've always had a mind for mechanical things, and a love of making things better, **I have found a transformative difference in being able to use the internet to learn how to do things.** We used to have to go

to the library and hope! Want to change the rear differential fluid in your 2023 Honda Ridgeline? The dealer will charge you many hundreds of dollars for that 20 minute job. Or, you can look it up on YouTube and find excellent videos that show exactly how to do it with basic tools. Get \$25 worth of special oil online, basic tools that most people have around and Bob's your uncle.

Many folks may not find the same pleasure in fixing things that I do, but that's not the point. We all have interests: Old, familiar interests and new shiny ones.

Whatever your interests may be, it is a beautiful life and a beautiful person that stays eager to learn.

I'm fond of saying that interested people are interesting people. One way or another, through Senior Services or some other way, get out and try something new, take a class on something you are curious about, get a bit more fit. And then, come by and tell us what you learned or enjoyed!



Brian Windrope
Executive Director



SENIOR NUTRITION PROGRAM

A Meal Shared, A Community Strengthened: Growing connection and support for seniors.

Our Senior Nutrition Program (SNP) has always been about more than just a meal, it's about creating connections and providing a space for seniors to gather, laugh and support each other.

Our biggest program, SNP has continued to gain steam as we rebuild from the pandemic. Not only have we **reopened our Community Dining site in Shelton, but we've also added new locations in Belfair and Tumwater, expanding our reach to a total of seven sites.** Along with Olympia, Lacey, Rochester and Tenino, we're growing faster than ever, allowing us to make a bigger impact across the South Sound.

“**Having a place that is safe, warm and inviting where you can meet with friends, catch up on town gossip and share health concerns means more than just having a hot lunch.**” — SNP Director, Stephanie Penland

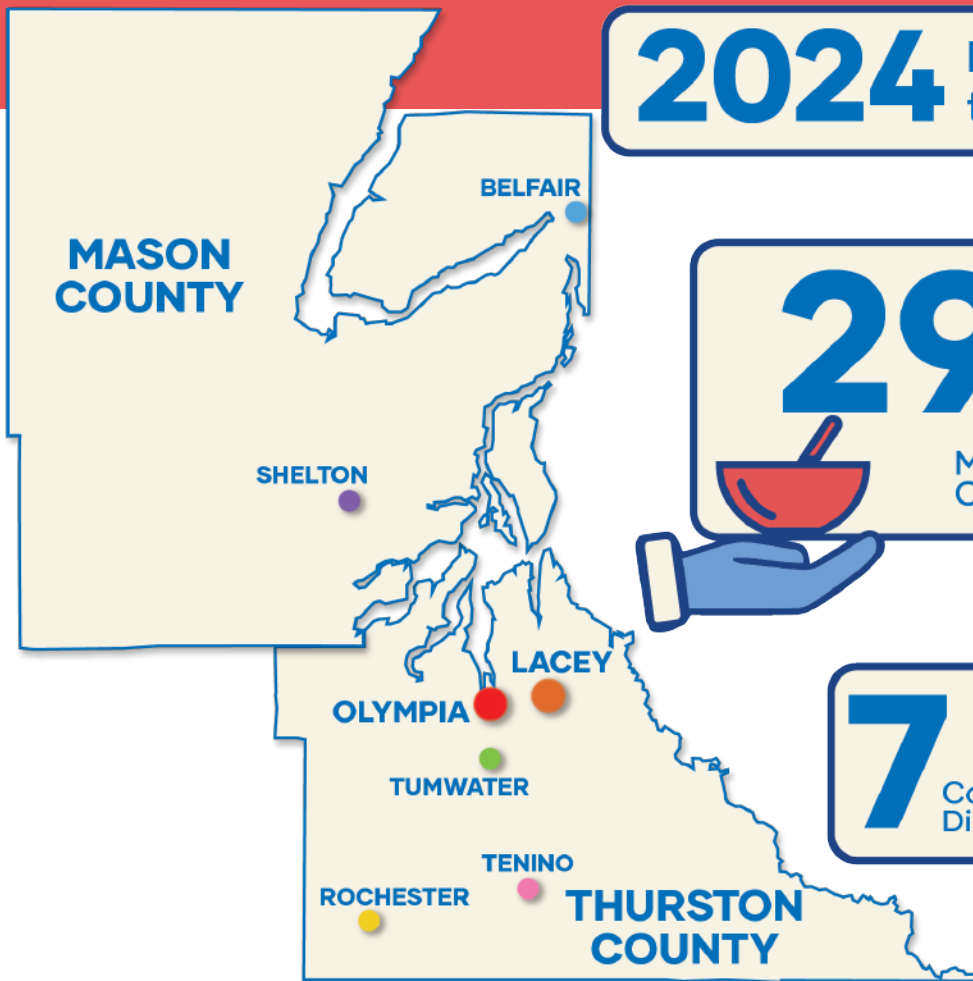
This focus on connection is especially crucial in our rural areas where access to food and community can be limited.

“Our sites in Belfair, Tenino and Rochester are smaller but incredibly meaningful,” Penland explained. **“Seniors in these rural areas are facing food deserts and as a result, food insecurity.”**

Whether a senior is in a rural or urban area, they might not be able to get to our Community Dining sites—that's where Meals on Wheels comes in. **MOW provides homebound seniors with the chance to socialize while their needs are met.**

As our program expands to meet the needs of more seniors, it's the support of our community that makes it all possible. Every meal served brings not only nourishment but also a sense of belonging, and we're grateful to everyone who helps make that happen!

2024 PROGRESS UPDATE through September



29,976

Meals served from our
Community Dining kitchens



7

Community
Dining Sites



1,624

Seniors served



OLYMPIA

Mondays - Fridays
11:45 am - 12:15 pm
Olympia Senior Center
222 Columbia St NW
Olympia, WA 98501

LACEY

Mondays - Fridays
11:45 am - 12:15 pm
Virgil Clarkson Lacey Senior Center
6757 Pacific Ave SE
Lacey, WA 98503

BELFAIR

Thursdays
11:45 am - 12:15 pm
HUB Center for Seniors
111 NE Old Belfair Hwy
Belfair, WA 98528

TUMWATER

Mondays - Fridays
11:45 am - 12:15 pm
Tumwater Old Town Center
215 North 2nd Ave SW
Tumwater, WA 98512

TENINO

Mondays - Tuesdays
11:30 am - 12:00 pm
Quarry House
319 Park Ave
Tenino, WA 98589

SHELTON

Monday - Friday
11:45 am - 12:15 pm
Shelton United Methodist Church
1900 King St
Shelton, WA 98584

ROCHESTER

Wednesdays & Fridays
11:00 - 11:30 am
Rochester United Methodist Church
18206 Corvallis St SW
Rochester, WA 98579



Scan for meal site
information and
our monthly menu!

southsoundseniors.org/nutrition/dining



WE WENT OVER THE EDGE FOR SENIORS AND WE'RE GOING AGAIN!

Save the Date:
June 28, 2025

Taking Adventure to New Heights: We're proving age is just a number!

What would you do to support a cause you believe in? Many of us would happily write a check or volunteer our time. **But would you be brave enough to hold onto a rope and rappel down the side of a building?**

That's just what 30 folks did this past summer at our inaugural **Over The Edge** event. As a crowd of onlookers cheered them on, these valiant souls, **ranging from 10 to 85 years old**, stepped off the roof of a four-story building at The Hub in Lacey to support Senior Services for South Sound. By the time the last person came down into Huntamer Park, **they had helped us raise an incredible \$79,838** to support our vital programs and services.

Among our fearless rappellers was 75-year-old Margaret, who described the experience as both exhilarating and empowering. "At my age, you don't always expect to have the chance to do something like this," she laughed. "I was shaking like a leaf up there!"

But Margaret prevailed, only getting stuck once when she went a little too fast causing the safety brake to kick in.

“It was amazing. I'm proud of myself and I'm proud to be able to do it for a great cause.” — Margaret

Each participant raised at least \$1,000 from their friends, families and social networks in order to have the chance to rappel. One incredible participant managed to raise \$10,000, despite being terrified of heights. Thanks to the generous contributions of donors and sponsors, this first Over The Edge was a great success, and we plan to build on that success next year.

We're excited to announce that Over The Edge will return next summer, taking place on Saturday, June 28. Once again, folks will be rappelling down into Huntamer Park – and maybe you'll be among them! So save the date and start thinking about stepping up and going Over The Edge in 2025.



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222 Columbia St NW
Olympia, WA 98501

**Helping Local
Seniors Thrive**



83,549

Meals Served



135

Low-Income
pet owners
helped



2,637

Rides Given



So far this year
and we're just getting started!

Discover how we're making a difference for local seniors!