

Life is Better Shared



Our senior centers in Olympia and Lacey have often been called “the living room of the community.” And while Merriam-

Webster defines a living room as “a room in a residence used for the common social activities of the occupants,” we know it’s more than that.

A living room is the soul of a home. It’s where laughter echoes, friendships grow and stories unfold. It’s a place of comfort, connection and belonging. That’s exactly what our centers are: a shared space where seniors don’t just pass the time, they thrive.

Take Firman, for example. At 92, [Firman comes to the Olympia Senior Center nearly every single day.](#)

“It reminds him of when he was living on his sailboat,” his son, Gregory, tells us. Firman will even call the center “The Club” because it gives him the same feeling he got when he’d visit his yacht club.

LIFE IS BETTER SHARED

See, Firman may not always remember where he's supposed to be at a certain time, but **he knows he's in a place where he belongs**. He knows that he can visit the reception desk and ask, "Where am I supposed to be?"

"It's a **safe and friendly** place," Gregory says. "People check up on him when he doesn't show up."

Since he started coming to the centers, Gregory says that he has noticed "subtle changes" in his father that he largely attributes to the **routine and socialization** that being at the center, as opposed to in his house day after day, provides.

"It's a relief and a great benefit for him to have an outing every day," Gregory says. **"It's raised his spirits."**

Firman's story is just one glimpse of what happens when a community comes together. Like the living room of a home, our centers are a place where people can show up, settle in, and know they belong. **That's what community looks like.**



Firman (right) walks Enhancefitness® instructor Beverly to and from class every session.



Miles Together: Shared Journeys, Shared Stories

I've recently returned from doing one of my favorite things: a road trip. My oldest

son is beginning graduate school at Penn State, and so we drove his car out there with all his worldly possessions. (Which are not many I'm glad to say; he's a frugal, minimalist sort.) We were loaded up with tasty snacks (thankful to whoever invented chocolate peanut butter cups) and, unlike my travels as a young man, we had all the music we'd ever want on one little phone. No more fumbling for tapes at 80 mph!

A road trip is a true test of a relationship. I can recall several relationships of my youth that did not survive a road trip. I'm glad to say I get along fantastically well with my boys and we travel happily together. When to talk, when to be quiet? With two drivers, the miles slid easily away, even if he did go a bit slower than I prefer! Yellowstone, Grand Tetons, Rocky Mountain ... the National Parks were as wonderful as always. [Driving on the 12,200 foot high road in Rocky Mountain made my heart sing.](#)

On the way we visited my brother, who lives in Kansas City. It had been too long, and we enjoyed an evening together with him and all

the first cousins on a lovely ranch property one of them owns. [Boy, the differences are obvious when you travel out east.](#) Flat lands, deciduous trees and corn — that's pretty much what we saw from Kansas to Pennsylvania. On a natural history note: the insects are so loud it can drown out conversation, and we saw fireflies! The heat and humidity were tough for this lightweight NW boy, and were not compensated for by any thunderstorms. I love thunderstorms, and we had nothing but blue skies all across the nation.

The work we do here at Senior Services is all about people. And people are all about stories.

This trip was filled with great stories with people I love. In this issue of our quarterly publication, you will read a few stories of people we have in our community. **It's easy to not see individuals through the masses of humanity we pass in a day.** Yet we know that we are all just individuals, with stories that are worth sharing and hearing.

I hope you enjoy the stories in this newsletter, and that you go out and make a few more stories worth telling.

Brian Windrope
Executive Director



Elisabeth prefers to take her meals home, demonstrating the flexibility of the Community Dining Program.

The Power of a Shared Meal

At our senior centers, food is just the beginning; it's the connections that matter most.

For many, a hot meal is a comfort. But for seniors who gather at our [Community Dining sites](#), it's also an opportunity to see friends, make new ones and feel part of something bigger.

At the Virgil Clarkson Lacey Senior Center, Debbie and Elisabeth know this well. Though their stories are different, both women have found [community around the dining tables](#).

For Elisabeth, recently retired, Community Dining has been both a practical and joyful discovery. **"It's a blessing,"** she says. "I don't like to cook just for myself." Living with her daughter means there are always meals at home, but not always ones she can easily enjoy. [Coming to the center gives her options and flexibility.](#)

"I can take it with me and eat it for dinner," she says with a smile. Elisabeth joins others at the center for conversation before lunch, then tucks her meal away to savor later that evening. It's one way [Community Dining adapts to the lives of the people it serves](#), making sure no senior goes without a hot, nutritious meal.

Debbie's experience reflects another side of the program's impact — the way **it fights loneliness**. Debbie has been a regular at both the Lacey and Olympia centers for years, with one short exception when she moved to North Carolina. "I moved back because I missed this place," she says.

For Debbie, who lives with family, the program is excellent for those days that she wants to take a break from cooking, but she recognizes it as a [lifeline for others who are facing isolation, loneliness and even depression](#).

"Maybe you don't feel like eating today, but there's just something about sitting down and eating a meal **with someone else,"** she explains.

And even if she doesn't eat with us every day, Debbie says the social aspect of lunch and the center draws her in. "It's having a reason to get up, get dressed, and get out of the house. **I can't drive anymore, I can't just go down to McDonald's and people watch.**"

Instead, she finds the company and comfort she needs at the senior center. **"It's making family, making friendships,"** she says simply.

Community Dining offers more than food; **it offers belonging**. It's a space where seniors can **share laughter, swap stories and encourage each other** over plates of hearty meals. For many, it's the highlight of the day, and sometimes the reason to keep going.

And for those who can't make it to a center, **Meals on Wheels** brings the same nourishment and care directly to their doors, another way Senior Services ensures that every senior is fed, supported and connected.

In a time when too many older adults face isolation, Community Dining reminds us of something simple but profound: **food tastes better when it's shared.**

Meals that Make a Difference

50,839

Meals on Wheels delivered

48,970

Community Dining meals shared

1,728

Seniors served so far in 2025

Numbers as of August, 2025

Debbie sits down to share lunch with friends at the Virgil Clarkson Lacey Senior Center.



A Steady Hand Through the Maze:

Why SHIBA matters to seniors seeking answers and to the volunteers that guide them.

For 14 years, Maureen has been a steady and caring presence in our Statewide Health Insurance Benefits Advisors (SHIBA) program. *She's the kind of volunteer who doesn't just show up*, she makes sure that seniors have someone to lean on when navigating one of the most confusing parts of aging: Medicare.

What Maureen loves most about volunteering is the difference SHIBA makes for the people who call or come in for help. **"Without SHIBA, I think people would be a lot more stressed,"** she says.

Medicare is notoriously complicated. It's full of fine print forms and deadlines that can feel overwhelming. *And because it's not 100% coverage, Maureen says that there's a lot of options to sort through.*

That's where SHIBA comes in. The program offers **free, unbiased guidance to seniors**, helping them understand their options and avoid costly mistakes. But it's not always the big tasks that require guidance, Maureen says. Sometimes it's *people "just needing that little bit of support,"* giving two instances in the last day where clients just needed a quick explanation of what they were looking at.

Volunteering with SHIBA has been as much a gift for Maureen as it is for the people she serves. **"It feels good to be with a program that's giving back. It keeps my mind going, and it's being around a caring environment."**

She even jokes that she's come full circle: her first job at 17 was in an insurance office. Decades later, she's still in the world of insurance, but this time, with a heart for community.

For Maureen, SHIBA isn't just about Medicare. *It's about connection, purpose and the reassurance that no one has to navigate this journey alone.*



Maureen on a SHIBA call with a client.

Why Your Gift Matters

The living room isn't complete without YOU!

What Does Donating Do?

When you give to Senior Services for South Sound, you do more than fund programs, you build community. Your support helps us:

- Serve nourishing meals at home and around community dining tables where friendships grow.
- Offer meaningful classes, fitness programs and creative activities that keep seniors learning, laughing and moving.
- Respond flexibly to emergencies, rising food costs or a sudden loss of federal support
- And so much more!

Ed (left) and Musa gather together at the Olympia Senior Center almost daily to play table games.

The Need is Growing.

More seniors are calling, more families are stretched thin, and more neighbors are searching for connection. But thanks to you, we can say "yes" when help is needed.

Your gift ensures that no senior has to go hungry, feel isolated, or face aging alone. You make it possible for our centers to remain the place where everyone belongs — the living room of our community.

Ways to Give

Consider mailing a check using the envelope included with this newsletter. You can also give online or by calling us at 360.586.6181. Want to make an even bigger impact? Join our Sustainers Club with a monthly gift that supports seniors all year long. You can also leave a lasting legacy through planned giving, such as a bequest in your will or trust. And don't miss our Fall Gala on October 11, an evening of art, connection and community at the Olympia Senior Center. To learn more about your giving options, follow the QR code or reach out to our Development Team at 360.586.6181 ext. 110.



Learn about your giving options

southsoundseniors.org/give

Senior Services

FOR SOUTH SOUND

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Rollover Your IRA for Good

By taking a distribution from your IRA this year, you will likely pay more in taxes and may even reach a higher tax bracket. Rolling over part of your IRA's "required minimum distribution" or "RMD" to an organization like ours can help reduce your tax bill while supporting our cause.

Double the Benefits!

An IRA charitable rollover gift can benefit both you and our mission! Contact your IRA administrator to get started with your gift. While you will not receive an income tax deduction, you will not pay taxes on any distributions made to us.

Please also inform us of your plans so that we use your gift for the causes that mean the most to you.

