

A Light at the Door

It's 5:00 pm, and the sky is already dark.

The television washes the living room in a cool blue, illuminating a figure gently rocking in a battered recliner. He's not really watching, but the sounds offer a little comfort in the otherwise quiet house.

For many older adults in our community, the hardest part of aging isn't the aches or the paperwork — it's the silence.

For Lee, the quiet settled in slowly.

First, it was retiring and not having to go to work every day. Then he stopped driving after a scare behind the wheel. Friends meant to visit, but schedules filled, days slipped by, and soon, even the phone calls began to dwindle.

The grocery store felt farther away. Even small tasks began to feel complicated.

The evenings were the hardest.

He told himself he was fine. He had always been independent and he didn't want to be a burden. But independence can begin to feel a lot like isolation when there's no one to share it with.

Then one morning, there was a knock at the door.

A warm smile. A hot meal. A few minutes of conversation that lingered long after the door closed. **The Meals on Wheels volunteer didn't just deliver nourishment, but connection.**

Lee says he didn't expect that.

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A LIGHT AT THE DOOR

"They don't just drop the food and leave," he says. "They ask how I'm doing. They remember things."

One afternoon, during a delivery, Lee mentioned he had been putting off a doctor's appointment because he wasn't sure how he would get there.

"Kathy asked if I'd called the Transportation program," Lee says. "I said, 'Who?' Is that like a taxi? I can't afford that!"

Kathy told him that **Senior Services could take him to his appointment for free**, and, after a short phone call, he had a ride scheduled.

"It means a lot," Lee says. "Even if I can't get there on my own anymore, I still feel like I'm in control."

Lee doesn't leave his home often these days. But he no longer feels like he's facing everything alone.

"When you're by yourself, it can get pretty quiet," he says, gently rocking in the old recliner. "Now I know someone will be here. It makes a difference."

Across Thurston and Mason counties, thousands of older adults face moments like Lee's. The darkness may look different for each person — the loss of a spouse, a tight budget, declining mobility — but the feelings are similar.

And that's where the light begins.

Because when a meal is delivered, when a ride restores independence, or when emergency assistance from the PALS Fund keeps a beloved pet alive — something shifts.

The silence softens.

The room brightens.

And no one has to feel alone.





Light, Lifted Together

may i be gay

*like every lark
who lifts his life*

from all the dark

who wings his why

*beyond because
and sings an if*

of day to yes

How this dear friend of a poem by E.E Cummings has guided and **consoled and brightened my life!** When young and wandering wilderness alone for weeks on end, I would entertain myself with recitations of poems that had stuck in my mind. I could honestly go for several miles doing this, being altogether better after doing so. When this one would come up on the mental playlist, I would invariably smile and brighten my steps. **I'd look to the sky, smell the green grass, admire the trees and listen to the birds sing.**

Far be it from me to explain poetry in any general way, but I can certainly speak to how poems live in my own heart. This compact gem has for me the magical combination of cadence, musicality, vivid imagery, silliness, and utterly profound truth all in one little package.

I've listed this poem in a prior newsletter, which you may recall, but have not focused on it like this. I do so now because this first newsletter of 2026 has a theme of returning light, and the struggle of light amidst darkness. **Our newly stated mission is: To enhance the quality of life for people as they age. That is a fundamentally bold and provocative idea.** That our very purpose is to meet people where they are, and find ways to raise their quality of life. What light! What an effort to sing ifs of days to yes!

Look within and see examples of how our volunteers and staff brighten days for people. Yet it must be said that we cannot enhance lives unless people choose to lift their own life from the darkness of isolation. The beauty of singing our lives to yes, to lift our lives from all the dark, to reject answers or knowing that shut down our shining. To instead rise up and wing our way to the best lives we can imagine. **That's our charge as humans. That's our purpose here at Senior Services; to meet you at the door and welcome you.**

Brian Windrope
Executive Director

What **Your Light** Made Possible in 2025



173,311
meals shared



6,181
hours of
activities



3,843
seniors assisted
with Medicare



\$62,552
in veterinarian
bills paid



13,470
caregiver
relief hours



3,547
client rides to
essential services

Every number is a neighbor whose life was
brightened thanks to **your generosity**.

A Room Full Of Color

It's 2:00 pm and Lisa smiles as she walks into the Virgil Clarkson Lacey Senior Center. She's just come back from a morning of running errands and a long lunch out with friends.

She greets a man socializing near the reception desk with the warmth of someone who's known a person for a lifetime. He doesn't answer.

It takes him a minute, two, but then his face lights up. Cliff was diagnosed with Alzheimer's two years ago and has been a participant of the **Brighter Days** program for a little over five months.

"He loves the singing," Lisa says. "It's hard to explain how much that means to me."

For families like Lisa and Cliff's, Brighter Days is more than a program. **It's relief.** It's a reminder that even as circumstances change, joy can still fill a room.

**Names and image changed to protect privacy.*



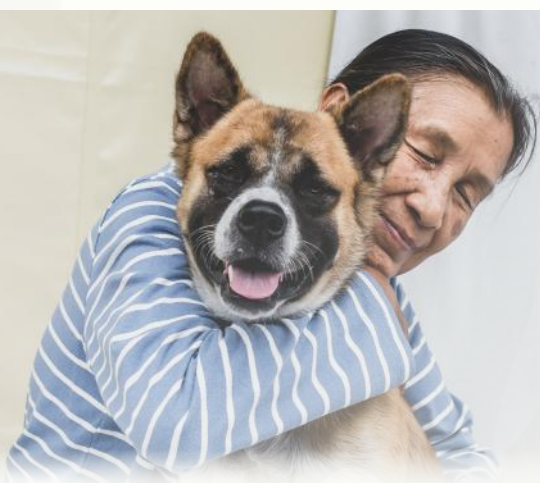
The Ever-Present Friend

Kim is lost in thought while she sits at her kitchen table and stares at the stove. She's not really seeing what is, but what *was*. She can still see her husband there breaking egg yolks as he tries to flip them over. He's been gone for a while now, but sometimes these little memories catch her off guard.

She's interrupted by a weight on her knee and a big sigh. Kim turns her attention to the furry head that's constantly invading her space and smiles.

Like Kim, her dog Rocket is going a little gray. **They both have appointments and medications and sometimes, Kim has to make tough decisions.** Most of the time, it's Rocket's medication she's picking up at the pharmacy and not her own.

For seniors like Kim, the **PALS Fund** helps cover veterinary costs, so Rocket can stay right where he belongs: by her side.



CONTINUING THE WORK

The Light Continues

Every day, someone new reaches out.

A senior who hasn't shared a meal with anyone in weeks.

A caregiver quietly running on empty.

A neighbor unsure how to get to a critical medical appointment.

A client overwhelmed by Medicare paperwork spread across the kitchen table.

The needs look different, but the feeling is often the same: uncertainty.

At Senior Services for South Sound, we believe that aging should not mean isolation. It should not mean choosing between medication and meals. It should not mean navigating complex systems alone.

Because of generous supporters like you, we are able to answer the phone. We are able to open the door. We are able to say, "Yes, we can help."

But the need is growing.

More seniors are living alone and more families are stretched thin. Costs continue to rise for food, transportation, veterinary care and utilities.

And yet, every time a donor chooses to give, something steady and hopeful happens.

A meal is delivered.

A caregiver takes a breath.

A ride arrives.

A beloved pet receives care.

The light continues.

With your support, we can ensure that no senior in our community has to wonder if anyone cares.



Why Your Gift Matters

The light continues because of 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!



When the Light Is Needed Most

There are moments when a simple knock, a safe ride or a clear answer makes all the difference.

Because of you, we are able to answer the phone, schedule the ride, deliver the meal and sit down at the kitchen table to help.

Your support ensures that when someone reaches out, we can respond with more than words — we can respond with action.

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. 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



222 Columbia St NW
Olympia, WA 98501

\$72 Can Change Lives

When you give **\$72 or more**, you automatically become an annual member of Senior Services for South Sound and help ensure that no senior in our community has to age alone.

- Meals delivered.
- Rides provided.
- Caregivers supported.
- Beloved pets cared for.

**Become a
member today.**

southsoundseniors.org/give
360.586.6181