

Serving Seniors, Adults with Disabilities, and Those Who Care for Them

Island Senior Resources



spring &
summer
2020

Island Senior Resources is the trade name for Senior Services of Island County

Journal

Living Your Best Life

“Adjusting the sails” means *doing* something about a situation we find ourselves in. Not every situation will end up as we wish it to, but often, circumstances can be improved, at least a little. How do you adjust when the winds change?

Most sailboats are more complicated than the rowboat my dad attached a sail to and proudly christened as our family sailboat. We invented grand tales of sailing adventures on the high seas. One summer morning, my young siblings and I launched the boat on the lake behind our home, determined to sail all the way across. We did OK until the wind died. First, we sat there, hot, bored, and frustrated. My sister complained, “The wind will *never* come up!” The youngest of us said, “Yes it will! If we just wait, the wind will come back and then we’ll be across before lunch.” We laughed at him, rolled our eyes at his optimism, and continued to sit there in the hot stillness.

After a while, one of us said, “This is stupid, I’m not going to sit here and sweat in the sun all afternoon!” Being children with incredible fountains of imagination, our ideas soon began to flow. “What if we... or we could...” We finally agreed we didn’t really need to get to the other side; what if we just went to the island in the middle? Soon, we were crafting plans for building a castle on the island, bringing food and sleeping bags, and starting our own colony! But as the day wore on, even the island turned out to be too far away with no wind to help us. We barely managed to get back to the dock by paddling with our hands, and swimming and pushing the little boat, but we were more determined than ever to try again.

We tried and tried all that week. Our hearts were set on reaching “our” island. Each evening we made plans for what we’d try the next

“The pessimist complains about the wind; the optimist expects it to change; the realist adjusts the sails.”

— William Arthur Ward

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day. We brought “tools” to help us, like lids from trash cans to use as paddles, and a long branch to push us along the shallow bottom. One day a storm came up. Waves nearly swamped the boat and the wind cracked the mast on our way back to the dock. As we walked home in the rain, our neighbor called out, “What a day for a sail!” He was chuckling and shaking his head. We told him about the mast, and he asked us, “Would you like me to help you fix it?” He came to the lake the next morning with his toolbox and showed us how to make the repairs. He listened to our plans and suggested we sail a different course, one that would more likely get us to the island.

Two days later, we got there! We finally reached our island. Cheers rang out. Did it matter that we didn’t sail to the other side of the lake? Not to us. Reaching the island wasn’t what we’d planned for, but once we re-set our expectations and changed our focus from where we couldn’t get to, to where we could, reaching the island became an achievement, not a defeat. We’d “adjusted our sails,” with or without the wind at our backs.

From then on, through years of personal, physical, and emotional challenges, I’ve remembered that summer week and how willingly we adapted to what came our way. As my hair greys and the years pass, I find myself asking, “What will it mean to live my best life tomorrow when my body is less capable, or my mind is less sharp, or when that happens to others

“While the weather itself is out of our control, how we react to that weather, plan for that weather, and work through that weather is certainly within our control.”

— Dave Holtz, Delta Airlines
senior vice president

I love? What can I *do* while I learn to let go of what I, or others, can do no longer? Aging is something that happens to us daily from the time we are born. If we are lucky, *we get to age*. It’s everyone’s reality, every day, not something happening to someone else. If I want to live my best life, the challenge isn’t age, it’s *attitude*. I can *decide* I am not too old to change. I can *learn* to adapt by doing things more efficiently, more creatively, and more effectively. I can *choose* to venture into unknowns with curiosity, break free of old habits, welcome the difference between yesterday and today, and open myself to tomorrow. I can *accept* the help others offer, graciously.

Now, some days pass easily while others are filled with seemingly insurmountable challenges. Some changes happen gradually, others in an instant. As I look out across the lake today, thinking of that glorious summer, I remember how special reaching the island was for each of us, and how our ingenuity, determination, and the help of a caring neighbor got us there. In the summers that followed, we never did reach the far side of the lake and, we never sailed the high seas except in our imaginations. What mattered was we were happy with where we got to.

Today, I know I will navigate my way, and live my best life in the days ahead, if I remember to adjust my sails and find joy in the islands I discover along the way.

••• Robin Bush, Outreach Director

A Note from the Editor:

Welcome to Island Senior Resources’ semi-annual JOURNAL, replacing our previous Newsletter. Our focus is to shine light on issues important to living your best life in our shared community, and to help you feel connected to, and supported by, the resources at ISR.

Organizational Resilience



In February, Island Senior Resources knew our lives were about to change

due to COVID-19. With an advisor from the public health community and our board President, we held a planning session on

March 5 to transform ISR without losing the

capacity to serve Island County seniors, adults with disabilities, and those who care for them. By that afternoon, we had a strategy for every aspect of ISR. Next, our outreach staff and program leadership went to work updating our website, sending enews, and writing to clients, volunteers, employees, and the community to detail our transformation. We were in action on the ISR COVID-19 Response Plan.

By March 9, our Aging & Disability Resources team was working from home as the front line of contact with Island County residents. Two days later, we closed our Time Together adult day program and our seven community meal sites. On March 13, both our South Whidbey Resource Center and Senior Thrift closed to the public. Closures meant changes but did not mean services were ending. In just a week, we had re-imagined and transformed to meet community needs.

What does our transformation look like?

- Our Aging & Disability staff handles all incoming calls (95% increase in calls/day since March 8)
- Meals on Wheels (MOW) is expanding capacity (42% increase in meals, from 3,212 in February to 4,571 in March)
- Volunteer Services & Medical Transportation focuses on essential medical transportation and delivering groceries and medications (106 trips in March)
- Adult Day Services provides activity kits for participants at home, and online services for North Whidbey program participants
- Support groups and a singing group use Zoom online chat
- The lending closet is available by appointment
- SHIBA offers Medicare consultations by phone and email
- A new online volunteer recruitment/help request system is active. Volunteers make wellness phone calls to MOW participants and other isolated seniors (184 in 4 weeks)
- Our website, social media, and enews release frequent updates, and Island Times is online
- We actively coordinate with the Island County Departments of Health and Emergency Management, the Center in Oak Harbor, Camano Center, WhidbeyHealth, Good Cheer, Goosefoot, Island Transit, Sno-Isle Libraries, Northwest Regional Council, and elected officials

From the Editor:

Some programs and classes referred to in this issue of the Journal are currently modified to adapt to circumstances created by COVID-19.

What allowed ISR to be resilient and transform?

It took passion for our mission, confidence in what we know how to do, commitment to facing adversity with courage, willingness to look outside the box for solutions, capacity to deal with complexity, and our belief in “We” — the power of staff, volunteers, and community working together. The ISR strategic plan asks us to be leaders on behalf of those we serve, to assure access to services, to act in partnership with other organizations, and to build community. That does not waiver.

We are on a journey of continuous discovery about life during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are learning what resilience means for each of us, for businesses and nonprofit organizations, our communities, and our nation. Consider Franklin D. Roosevelt’s famous quote during World War II, “We have nothing to fear but fear itself” or, words from a Hopi elder, “This moment humanity is going through can now be seen as a portal and as a hole. The decision to fall into the hole or go through the portal is up to you.” ISR chooses to act with courage and see the next stage of the 21st century as a portal. JOIN WITH US; WE NEED SUPPORT FROM OUR COMMUNITY NOW MORE THAN EVER!

... Cheryn Weiser, Executive Director



Community Resilience

Caring

Community resilience grows stronger when bonds form between people who care. When you feel cared for, you know you are not alone; you rely on others and they rely on you. Caring for each other is more than doing good deeds. It takes deep, sustained sharing. Caring takes time to develop and grow. It is the bond that shelters when storms arrive.

For fifteen years, I lived in an isolated rural area on the edge of steep coastal cliffs. There was one road in, through, and out of the area; it hugged the mountainsides, built on unstable rocks that regularly slid into the sea. One winter extreme rains washed the road away. Hundreds of people were cut off. Resources could only be reached by a one-way helicopter trip out that meant you could leave, but not come back. Those who stayed were rugged self-sustaining folks who cared deeply for each other and knew that, together, we could take care of each other. Key word: ***Together***.

Kids couldn't get to school in town, so a makeshift school was formed in a local inn (customers had been "chopped" out). A local horse vet started a clinic for animals. A retired doctor helped at the health clinic. The library kept its doors open. Locals with goats gave out goat milk and cheese.

We weren't cut off, we were cut-IN. Everyone with a need, asked; everyone with a skill, offered. The road remained closed for three months. Our resilience, and ability to be sustainable, relied on our sharing and caring for each other.

Today, for our Island County communities to be resilient, strong, and able to handle whatever comes, it starts with building and nourishing our deep sense of caring for each other, just like in that isolated, but resilient village.



Landslide road collapse isolated a community for months
Photo courtesy of the California Department of Transportation

Agility

Caring is the first essential element of community resilience. Next, it takes agility to respond to new situations. Agility is the ability to be clever, act responsively, and move quickly. Our communities can strengthen our resilience when we look to models of agility in unusual places.

NETFLIX is a great example of agile thinking. Remember when movies were rented on VHS and DVDs in stores? Netflix knew customers struggled with inconvenience and unpredictable late fees, so Netflix created a strategic solution that removed those barriers. They began mailing DVDs to customers on a paid subscription basis. Customers got the movies they wanted, at a known cost, which in turn produced regular income for Netflix. Win/Win. Netflix was smart, moved quickly, differentiated themselves, and transformed the industry. They thrived because they were *agile* and willing to create something entirely new.

NETFLIX

But "new" doesn't last forever. New becomes old and needs to be renewed. When streaming replaced DVDs, Netflix had to be agile again. They produced their own productions so they could offer customers unique programming. That, too, caught on and is now the norm. You can be sure their next agile move is another coming attraction.

Innovation

Years ago, the Fisher Company made carriage bodies for horse-drawn carriages. When the automobile came into being, Fisher recognized that to stay in business, they needed to innovate. They stopped manufacturing bodies for horse-drawn carriages and developed an entirely new body that could withstand the weight and vibration of the new motorized vehicles. Through innovation, they did not just survive, they thrived. Very soon, they were producing 100,000 car bodies a year for Ford, GM, and others.

The manufacturer of the buggy whip, used for carriages, did *not* adapt its products to the rise of the automobile. They could have innovated and made accessories for the new automobiles but, they didn't. They continued to manufacture buggy whips, and in a few years, their market nearly disappeared, and the company failed.

When we are looking for our own communities to be resilient, we need to see where our seeds and water and sunlight are. Where are we? What can we build on, to grow a new future? Andrew Zolli, author of the book, "Resilience," shared a metaphor. He said, "Resilience is like a landscape. Imagine you are crossing hills and valleys: valleys represent variation from present circumstances, with opportunities and dangers. Hills are critical thresholds, once past the peak you face the next valley below with new opportunities and new dangers. As we continue our journey, we cross the next valley and the next hill and then the next and the next. To survive, we need to be resilient in our responses and build our capacity to adapt to new circumstances."

"Once forces have compelled you into a new circumstance, it may be impossible for you to return to your prior environment. You have entered a new normal."

— Andrew Zolli

"Sometimes, when you innovate, you make mistakes. It is best to admit them quickly and get on with improving your other innovations. Don't be afraid to admit defeat. Admit it, learn, and move on." — Steve Jobs

Collaboration

Resilience requires collaboration to adjust to change, and recover quickly. Remember the great Yellowstone fire in 1988? It burned over 800,000 acres in five months. Yet it took only one rainy season for new growth to establish. That's resilience. Why? It is nature's version of collaboration. Every component of the natural system contributed. Seeds that *require* fire to sprout, sprouted. Birds dropped seeds, creating diversity of plants. Water and sunlight combined with new carbon, essential for life, and animals returned to feed on new growth and reproduced.

Community Resilience (continued)

Resilience does not mean recovery. It is *transformation*. What *was*, is not what *is*. When we have the right mix of caring, agility, innovation, collaboration, there is one more ingredient necessary for our communities to be resilient. *Resilience requires leaders with the courage to transform.*

Leadership

Along with other essential service providers, Island Senior Resources is working to build a resilient approach to healthcare in Island County. Island Senior Resources, WhidbeyHealth, Island County Human Services, and Public Health collaborated to create a screening tool for providers to assess a patient's full range of health needs and risk factors. Well-being is more than just medical treatment; it includes housing, food, transportation, and more. No one organization can fulfill all needs, but collaborative efforts can transform the way people are cared for in Island County.

The screening tool was introduced as a pilot project for six weeks at WhidbeyHealth's Freeland clinic. Once screened, those who requested it were referred to Island Senior Resources for basic information, home-visits, legal and housing referrals, medical transportation, Meals on Wheels, bill paying assistance, health insurance, and more. Those with severe isolation and significant care needs were connected to case managers for help. This significantly reduced the need for medical providers to try to direct patients to non-medical support services.



The goal is to support the whole person in achieving a life with health, dignity, and comfort. This level of care reduces hospital stays, connects people to family and friends, and involves them in choices for their own health and well-being. When people have this opportunity, they live better lives.

Transforming healthcare delivery to treat the full individual, although complex, is achievable. We will face challenges and find new opportunities. We are seeking ways to deliver care that meet the needs of our most vulnerable populations, while building a partnership sustainable for each provider. While the pilot program generated 79 referrals out of 253 screenings, it also raised awareness about long-term funding to meet that level of need. Funding for staff components of the pilot came from temporary sources. Based on what we learned, and the resources available, the team is exploring how best to move forward.

Being adaptable and increasing resilience along the way, requires a growth mindset that knows learning how to do better never ends. Our ultimate goal together is to create lasting services that deliver positive outcomes, all within the resources and staff we have available.

Building a resilient community takes caring, agility, innovation, collaboration, and leadership with the tenacity to succeed. The fortitude and persistence of our partners is admirable. We need and depend on each other.

... Robin Bush, Outreach Director
and Chasity Smith, Director of
Program Development

ROADMAP TO COLLABORATION

STEP 6

Project partners assess the effectiveness, challenges, and successes of the pilot, and determine methods for managing workload and sharing referral load with partners so quality of service is not compromised and those with greatest needs are served

STEP 7

Project team explores long-term funding options

STEP 2

Collaborating organizations develop the screening tool

STEP 5

Screenings for those requesting referral support are delivered to Island Senior Resources for data entry and follow-up with patient

STEP 4

Island Senior Resources dedicates one full-time Case Manager to serve referred individuals

STEP 3

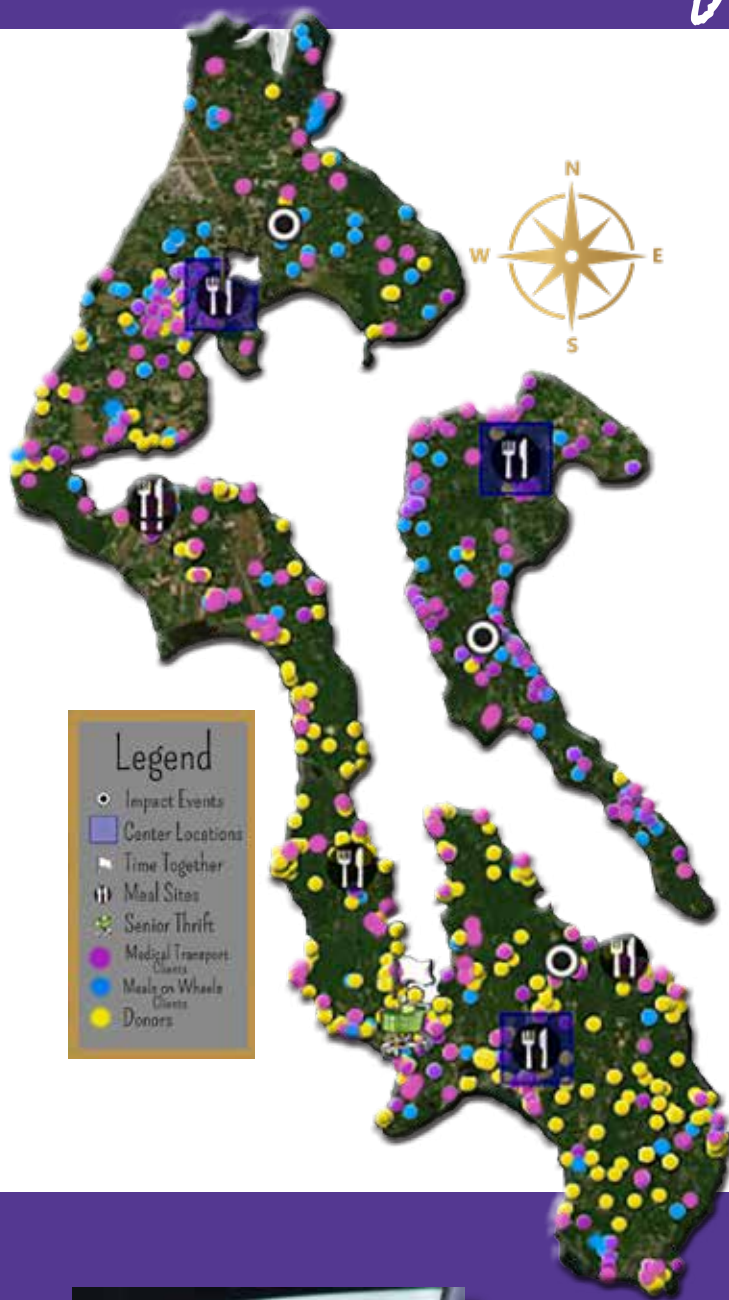
For a trial period of six weeks, patients are offered optional screening at Freeland Clinic

STEP 1

Island Senior Resources, WhidbeyHealth, Island County Human Services, and Public Health decide to collaborate on a new healthcare model for treating the whole person and design a new referral system

Community Impact

(2019 data)



8,192

clients served by
Aging & Disability
Resources.



81,000+

meals served or
delivered.



176,481

miles driven by
volunteer drivers
to and from medical
appointments.



8,750

hours of social
opportunities
enjoyed by
Time Together adult day
program participants.



For questions, or to make a gift or pledge
that supports these essential services,
use the enclosed envelope, or visit
www.senior-resources.org/donate
or contact Charles LaFond 360-210-3011
charles@islandseniorservices.org

Become a funding partner today.



Island Senior Resources is experiencing massive program growth. Currently, it costs **\$4.2 million** annually to serve seniors, adults with disabilities, and those who care for them across Island County. Government grants fund **\$1.7 million**, meaning we must raise **\$2.5 million** this year in order to keep up with this startling growing need.

Program Growth 2019 v. 2018

78%

Residents over the age of 60 have accounted for 78% of Island County population growth since 1990*

*2019 Economic Trends and Conditions Summary Report
Island County Planning & Development

Aging & Disability
Resources Contacts



+34%

Meals on Wheels
Deliveries



+48%

Volunteer Medical
Transportation
Trips Provided



+61%

At the same time, the number of
volunteer drivers has decreased 11%

State Health
Insurance Benefits
Advising (SHIBA)



+75%

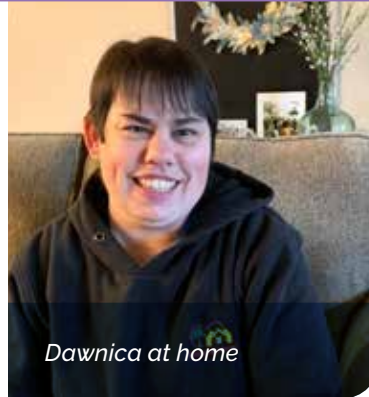
A Community with Heart Connects and Makes A Difference

When you say hello to Dawnica, she shares a warm hello right back. She is a wonderful person, full of creativity and athletic energy. Dawnica attends Time Together in Oak Harbor, Island Senior Resources' program for adults who have cognitive or physical disabilities, or who are isolated. She is a dedicated, fully engaged employee at Welcome Home, a senior memory care community in Oak Harbor.

Dawnica is one chapter of the remarkable story of the inclusive, open hearts of our Oak Harbor community. The story began in 1957 when eight families of children with disabilities were excluded from public education. In those days, people with disabilities were segregated and isolated due to the societal expectation that they would be cared for out of the public eye. These families started an organization called Sherwood. Sixty years have passed and today Sherwood works to create an inclusive society where those with disabilities have the opportunity to live full, independent lives as part of our community. They have created a model program that builds partnerships between those in need and local employers. They are cultivating a community of understanding and acceptance, as well as educating the community in respectful language, inclusive practices, and disability etiquette. Local businesses have embraced this as a community value.

Sherwood has a long list of employers who support the idea of hiring those with a wide range of abilities. They help at least 40 community members with disabilities find jobs each year with over 30 different employers. Employers are helped to identify their business needs and are then connected with a person who can fill those needs. Workers are prepared for interviews, accompanied on interviews, provided skills training, and supported to make smooth transitions into the workplace. Employers and workers are both guided on an on-going basis, to adjust tasks to meet the individual's abilities and the employer's needs, so everyone "wins."

From the Editor: *This story reflects life before COVID-19 and the collaboration that makes communities resilient. Due to COVID-19, Welcome Home is temporarily closed to visitors. Dawnica looks forward to participating in Time Together and helping others at her job as soon as it is safe to do so. Thank you to everyone who is working to keep our communities connected during challenging times.*



Dawnica at home



Dawnica describes her job at Welcome Home: "I'm a housekeeper. I clean to help keep everyone healthy. It's important to keep people healthy." As she speaks, you can hear in her voice the pride she has in her job. She started working last year and works two days a week at Welcome Home. "I love it! The best part is meeting new friends. They mean a lot to me. I say hi to people and they say hi to me. I bring people juice and other things they ask for." She says, "All the people at Welcome Home help me out when I need it. They trained me. Work helps me feel connected." When asked what is most important to her about work, she answers without a moment's pause, "We help each other," and she smiles.

"Oak Harbor is a special place. We believe that when people with disabilities are included in their communities, communities are more aware and respectful of everyone. Oak Harbor is so ready to say yes to hiring people with disabilities."

**— Jesi Griffin, Director of Investment & Partnership,
Sherwood Community Services**

Her dad Jake said, "Dawnica is the most optimistic and hardest worker you'd ever want to meet. She loves working. Not all young people have a solid work ethic. Dawnica has that in spades. She feels incomplete if she is not working. She's passionate about it."

Dawnica carries her joy into the community wherever she goes. When she's not at work, she does special

Olympics — playing basketball, track, bocce ball, and bowling. She also spends time at Island Senior Resources' Time Together where she has a community of friends she deeply cares about and who care about her. "It's the best place. It's fun!" Her grandmother is nearby at Home Place Memory Care, so she can visit her after work several times a week. Dawnica's life is full of giving to others.

Sandra Oldemeyer, Executive Director/Director of Nursing at Welcome Home, shared what it means to their organization to create opportunities for everyone to work. "We have four to five employees with disabilities; it's in our hearts to help our community where we can. There's no reason why everyone shouldn't have a job. It is just a matter of finding the right match. We just adjust the tasks to what people can do, so everyone can succeed. When Dawnica first started, she was helping at meals, talking to people, and getting things our residents needed. Then we discovered she likes to clean so we added that too. Having Dawnica working for us has been great. She is so careful about her cleaning. None of our residents got the flu this year or last. We credit that to her good work and a great housekeeping department. Dawnica is a delight and our residents love her. She always has a smile on her face."

It's connection that matters — connecting members of the community to each other, valuing each other, and building partnerships in the community that support that. Thank you, Oak Harbor, for leading the way in Island County to positive solutions that provide great answers for everyone. Connection improves our capacity to be resilient.

... Robin Bush, Outreach Director

Island Senior Resources connects.

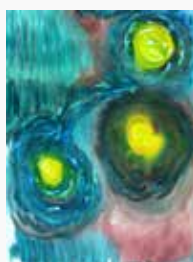
Our Time Together Adult Day program is now 100% online. Historically, Time Together has provided a supportive opportunity for adults with cognitive and developmental disabilities to be together, find friendship, enjoy activities, and connect with others. Now, due to the need for continued social distancing, Time Together is transforming and is focused on connecting our community's most vulnerable members, using technology. *Time Together @ Home* is now a virtual engagement program for adults with developmental disabilities and seniors who benefit from social engagement who are able to access the program via computer. Others, who require more hands-on support, may be able to access the program with an in-home caregiver's help. We are continuing to innovate ways to connect participants while also abiding by CDC recommendations for group activities. Our generous community has provided scholarship funding to help those in need of assistance to be able to attend.



*Thank you donors!
You make this
program possible.
We can't do this
without you.*



*Paintings by
Time Together Artists*



A NEW NORMAL

a story of personal hope & courage

... by Sarah Mehlum, mother of four, age 36

“It’s been one year since my diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis. I’ve learned a lot about what it means to live with a chronic, incurable disease. Every single day has been different; adaptability has become my most important quality.

MS is an inflammation of the central nervous system. There are times when the inflammation worsens symptoms, called exacerbations or relapses. Three months after my first relapse, I turned a corner and felt amazing. I felt alive and full of energy for eight months. I could exercise again, keep up with my family, and enjoy all of it. I definitely was feeling like “I can do this!”

Then my MS symptoms started creeping back. Facial numbness was my first sign. My lips, eyes, mouth, throat... my whole face felt like I’d just left the dentist. The severity of numbness fluctuated so I tried to stay positive, “hoping” that maybe I was fighting a cold and feeling “MS-y” because my immune system is cranked up (overreacting). On rough days my legs and brain just don’t connect. Wobbly, weak, heavy legs mixed with zero balance. Was this another relapse?



Sarah Mehlum and her daughter Annie

Island Senior Resources connects.



Island Senior Resources offers Chronic Disease and Chronic Pain Self-Management classes several times a year. **To learn more, call 360.321.1600 or 360.678.3373.**

Connection changes lives:

“I now know how important it is to take care of me so that I can take care of my husband.”

“I get so many tips from others in the workshop.”

“I don’t have to use my diabetes medicine any longer since my blood sugars are now in a good range!”

“My small successes help me with my overall health.”

— Class participants

Fatigue overtakes me most days. It’s so very frustrating to go from feeling like I can do it all, to rationing my energy. When fatigue hits, it hits down to the bone. The simplest things like eating, showering, and even talking can feel overwhelming. And mental fatigue follows closely behind. The idea of being in another exacerbation/relapse despite doing everything I could on my end to stay healthy (exercise, healthy diet, trying to remain stress-free, and taking medication to slow progression) is frustrating and disappointing. I want the control; I don’t want to have to just roll with it. I am constantly trying NOT to think about what direction my MS might take next. I wasn’t prepared for how intrusive and intimidating these thoughts can be. MS is a progressive disease, and as positive as I try to be every day, as much as I try not to worry about what the future will hold, having no control over it can be overwhelming!

After my diagnosis, when I was feeling energized and back to myself and confident that I could “take it” and ready to prove that having MS didn’t mean I didn’t have control, I was only prepared for the physical challenges. No one prepared me for the emotional struggles of having an incurable disease. I thought after going through my first exacerbation/relapse that I had accepted my diagnosis. But, in truth, the real question is, “How do you accept something like a chronic disease?” I am still struggling to face MS as my new normal. I can *hope* that my exacerbations will pass quickly, that I’ll bounce back to

myself, that I'll find a balance between listening to my body and not missing out on my full life. But *hope* is a barrier to acceptance, so I will choose to *trust* instead of hope. The word "hope" feels empty, like fluff, hollow. I want to *trust*, not "hope" that I'll be ready for what's next, *trust* that I'll be able to adapt daily and *trust* that I'm doing my best, even when it feels like I'm not.

MS is such a personalized disease that even fellow "MSers" don't always understand what you're going through. And, while my family is my ultimate support system, I still feel like I can't even begin to explain the way MS makes me feel physically and emotionally. One year after my diagnosis, I am feeling like I'm nearly right where I started in this "new normal." Even when my body screams at me to rest, I am still stubborn and find it hard to stop, listen, and obey. Beyond listening to my body, continuing to feel present while struggling with physical and mental fatigue, asking for help and accepting it when it's offered, saying "no" when I need to, and blocking out intrusive thoughts are all things I've grown into, but only by a bit. I am not going to let this isolating, unpredictable, stupid disease define me, so please give me grace, and hopefully I'll give myself some too. I am going to trust that I will find a balance. Baby steps... wobbly ones, but one foot in front of the other every day!"

The Essential Gift

"I met Carolyn Hansen through the Caregiver's Support Group at Island Senior Resources. I had a very narrow view of what I believed the women in "these types of groups" did for each other. I expected a pat on the back here, a platitude there, lots of, "Oh honey, you've got to expect bad days now and then; just get through them as best you can." Mostly, I went because I needed to talk to someone, anyone. I was in desperate need of a listening ear, hopefully an ear that was attached to someone who understood what it took to be a caregiver to someone you are very close to, and who would know how to help me with my particular circumstances.

Carolyn's commitment to caring for others goes deep. She works tirelessly with members of the group when they need a little (or big) something extra. She is a wise, compassionate, encouraging, amazing woman who brings out the best in those with whom she comes into contact. I am proud to call her my friend. I was surprised by the attitude and energy of those who attended the group, and it stems from Carolyn's guidance. She is able to tend a small handful of attendees who are grieving the loss of one aspect or another of their relationship. She gives the gift of support where there was once only helplessness, frustration, and sometimes anger over situations beyond our control.

I have never known a group of women who are as strong, sharp, and determined to care for someone else. We are each facing life crushing circumstances that rob us of our role in our relationships, and challenge every level of commitment, knowledge, and even common sense that we thought we had. We know that at some point, disease will attack both the one you care for, and your relationship, leaving you without comfort from them — no offered words of encouragement, or even a hug, to show you that some things are still the same. I am the youngest of these women, some by 20 years, and I admire them so much! I say, 'Buy them all a blue mask, a red cape, a pair of bright red and blue swirled leggings, and knee-high golden boots!' because they are all my superheroes!"

... Marilyn Joss, participant in the Caregiver's Support Group



Island Senior Resources connects.

To live our best life, at times each of us needs caring and support through life's challenges. We offer support groups online and in person (when safe to do so) to serve those dealing with issues related to grief, aging, Parkinson's, MS, and more. All are welcome. You are not alone. **To learn more, call: 360.321.1600 or 360.678.3373.**



From Adversity Heroes are Born

Many of us face challenges we never imagined would happen to us or a loved one. What do we choose when faced by adversity?

Steve Gleason, an NFL star, has lived for the last nine years with ALS (a.k.a. Lou Gehrig's disease) that destroys the muscles of the body. ALS does not affect the mind, so Steve has chosen to turn tragedy into triumph. He had everything going for him. He was a football star for the New Orleans Saints, he was getting his master's in business administration at Tulane, he married, and then in 2010 at age 33, he was diagnosed. Anger, frustration, and disbelief took over until something shifted. He chose to let people help him. His attitude rallied. "I promise to smile and laugh, and cry, and love with every breath that remains in my body." He's done that, and it's helped him through his darkest days.

His wheelchair hasn't stopped him. He focuses on everything he still *can* do. He and his wife had a baby, who Steve claims gave him a sense of purpose. He taught himself to use software that types using his eye motions so he could retain his ability to communicate. Today, he relies on a computer to speak, a machine to breathe, and is fed through a tube, but he still lives with passion and purpose.

His goal is to inspire others to push forward and overcome adversity. In his acceptance speech in January for the congressional gold medal for his contributions to ALS awareness, Steve said, "We all experience pain in our lives, but I believe that the problems we face are our opportunity and define our human purpose... Our greatest strength as a species has been our ability to bravely share our adversities and vulnerabilities with each other. Doing that, we are able to understand each other's issues and collaborate to solve problems and overcome any obstacle... It has been unquestionably critical to my survival and purpose for the past nine years living with a disease as dreadfully beautiful as ALS... If we can work to understand and solve each other's problems, and each other's pain, compassionately, then truly all things are possible."

During the course of his disease, as he can do less and less physically, he does more and more to make a difference for others. He started a foundation for caring for ALS patients, helped pass laws that insure access to speech generating devices for those with ALS, supported a major ALS research project, and helped develop eye tracking technology for those who are paralyzed. "If we have a purpose in life beyond being a cog in the human machine, mine is to help inspire people. I would like to motivate the world." Steve and his indomitable spirit and resilient attitude are a light to guide each of us through life events and the challenges of aging.



Steve Gleason 2020



Steve Gleason at the Louisiana Superdome, 2006

Steve shares one thing in common with one of our local heroes, Glenda Cantrell: **indomitable attitude in the face of adversity**. Glenda worked for Island Senior Resources for several years until two bouts with cancer followed by a diabetes diagnosis took her right to the edge. "I was on my way out. The pain was so bad, I was bedridden, and I was scared. I had to have full-time caregivers to do everything for me. I didn't want to die but I didn't want to live this way. And that was the turning point. One day, I decided I'm not ready to go yet! I am going to find a way to heal myself. Life is precious and I am going to make my life worth living."

So, she set to work to heal herself. She focused on three things: her attitude, staying connected, and finding



Glenda Cantrell

a purpose. She took on one new thing each day. “If I can feed the dog today, that’s better than what I could do yesterday.” And she did. One day it was “feed the dog,” the next it might have been “take a shower” or “set the table.” It didn’t matter what the one new thing was so long as she tried. It wasn’t easy but by shifting her attitude she made remarkable progress in healing and in doing so, she discovered a purpose for her life — she wanted to help others find their better path. It’s taken her two years, but her life is completely different. She is not pain-free. “I can live with that because look at how much better my life is now. I take care of myself; I am happy, I have a reason to live, and I get better and better every day!”

After chemo, she completely changed her diet which helped heal her body; she takes no medication except an occasional Tylenol. She’s learned to accept help graciously. “The guys in Safeway are so nice to me, especially when I tell them how handsome they are,” she says with a laugh. Laughter comes easily to Glenda. “I’m so happy to be here I can’t help but share that.” She took courses online to learn new skills, and now Glenda, full of life and a desire to help others, is a full-time accredited “life coach” counseling others on the power of attitude and purpose, and motivates others to reach their goals. Her business card reads, “Attitude Adjuster.” She speaks at Island Senior Resources’ Lunch & Learn programs, sharing her experience, her strength, and her hope. Glenda’s body may be held in a wheelchair for safety from falls, but “I’m on a roll!” she says. “I’ve been sick; I still am, but I learned how much power I have to heal myself by adjusting my attitude to “I can.” Now I help others recognize they have great power to improve their lives too. The only real choice you have in life is your attitude,” she says with a huge smile.

There is another thing that helps Glenda daily. “There is nothing worse than feeling alone and scared when life is challenging, so the other thing I do is reach out to other people. I call them, and if they haven’t heard from me in a few days, they call me. We look after each other and are there with support when a tough day comes our way.”

“I have learned how, by shifting my attitude, connecting with others, and choosing to give my life meaning by helping others find their inner strength, I can live a good life. Every day is not easy. I live with severe pain and challenge, and I don’t like it, but nothing is going to stop me from living my best life. I went from being bed-ridden and needing two caregivers full time, to being able to care for myself. When people see someone in a wheelchair, they usually see someone very unhappy. But that’s not what they see when they see me. I work on being happy. People are drawn to someone who is happy. I am grateful for all I do have; I don’t focus on what I don’t have.” On Glenda’s answering machine message she sings, “This Girl is on Fire” and she truly is. Glenda glows.

... Robin Bush, Outreach Director

Island Senior Resources connects.



Glenda and so many others find both connection and ways to help others at

Island Senior Resources. Glenda has been a speaker at Island Senior Resources’ free, inspiring, and informative Lunch & Learn talks.

Join in, connect, come share in community. For you, connection may be found in discovering there are people here to help you, or through driving others to essential medical appointments, making check-in phone calls to isolated seniors, or bringing groceries, pharmacy items, or Meals on Wheels to someone who is homebound.

You are not alone. When you reach out, others reach in. Call us. Join us.



Contact Us

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(360) 321-1600 or (360) 678-3373

reception@islandseniorservices.org

facebook.com/islandseniors

facebook.com/seniorthrift

Instagram: @islandseniors

Our Locations

Island Senior Resources (Bayview)

14594 SR 525

Langley, WA 98260

Just south of Bayview Road

Camano Center

606 Arrowhead Rd.

Camano Island, WA 98282

By Utsalady School

in collaboration with Camano Center

THE CENTER in Oak Harbor

51 SE Jerome St.

Oak Harbor, WA 98277

Opposite OH Elementary School

in collaboration with

The Center in Oak Harbor

Senior Thrift

5518 Woodard Rd.

Freeland, WA 98249

Just north of Main Street

Island Senior Resources

14594 SR 525, Langley, WA 98260

www.senior-resources.org

*Island Senior Resources is the trade name
for Senior Services of Island County.*

Save the date to attend one of our Impact Celebrations!

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These gatherings are not fundraisers. Join us for an hour and a half of gathering friends, light refreshments, and information. Hear how we have used donated funds and the impact these made for our community. Learn how the essential resources we provide to seniors, adults with disabilities, and those who care for them help them live their best life!

Mark your calendar today! All events 4:00 – 5:25 p.m.

South Whidbey

Coupeville

Oak Harbor

Camano Island

Thursday, October 1 @ Dancing Fish Winery

Tuesday, October 6 @ Captain Whidbey Inn

Thursday, October 8 @ Whidbey Golf Club

TBD — Please call (360) 210-3011 for information

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Your caring is what sustains us!