

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

Island Senior Resources

spring &
summer
2021

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

Cultivating Your Garden

1912: *The "Kingdom of Plenty"*

There was no road down the coast in those days, just a track that snaked along the ridgeline. Wagons could only pass when the weather was dry, and even then, it was a rugged three-day trip to reach distant homesteads.

Caroline made the trek a few times each year to bring books, some supplies, and packages of sweets wrapped in brown paper for the children. It was late afternoon as she neared the cabin. Seven children were jumping with joy, clamoring to see what she brought as their mama put a pot on the woodstove to warm soup for supper. Caroline had something special in her satchel she could hardly wait to deliver — packets of seeds for the garden, a copy of the new *Farmer's Almanac*, and a story for the children.

That evening they sat by the fire. Little Flora climbed onto Caroline's lap, listening, wide-eyed, as Caroline told the story of a garden kingdom. Everyone was enchanted by the unfolding drama as aphids invaded and ladybugs came to the rescue, while tomatoes and their companions (beans and flowers) formed a protective wall around the "Kingdom of Plenty" to defend it from marauders. A story where cooperation saved the realm was precisely the right way to turn gardening chores into a magical adventure

INSIDE

Growing a Sustainable Future

ISR and The Pioneer Way
Happiness is a Gift

What We Give
to Each Other

Cultivating Awe
The World-Wide-Woods

Cultivating Your Garden continued on next page

Cultivating Your Garden continued from p. 1

for seven siblings. Flora thought of the story a couple of weeks later as she planted the seeds. She put a few beans in with the tomatoes, nurturing each plant all summer. The *Almanac* had been right; it was a good year for growing.

Flora became my grandmother, and when I was six, she shared Caroline's story as we planted. She taught me about companions that thrive together. Years later, I realized it was through cultivating a garden and a simple child's story that I had learned one of life's greatest lessons — helping each other grow is the magic that binds us all.

1996: *Cultivating more than a garden*

I stood outside another mountain cabin, imagining. Could this steep hillside be more than an eroded embankment surrounded by wilderness? Could I grow a garden here? I decided to dig in, literally.

Grandma Flora had told me once about the hillside gardens of northern Italy, where lemon groves are terraced out of steep cliffs into arable beds. Cultivation through the centuries created rich soil and trees laden with fruit every year. Secrets of growing the golden fruit were passed down through generations, much like Caroline had passed her knowledge to Flora, and she, on to me; our gardens connect us through time.



Creating my garden with terraced levels and nourishing the soil would take time and patience. I remembered Grandma Flora saying her garden was a *community* of plants. The garden tale, "A Kingdom of Plenty," was about companionship and how each plant helped others to thrive. I planted marigolds and calendula with the vegetables to deter harmful pests and grew strawberries in the garlic patch because the ancient lore was right; together, they grew better than they would alone. "Make sure to tuck a few basil plants in with the tomatoes and plant a variety of plants tightly together like a quilt, so they nourish each other,

keep out weeds, and attract good insects," she'd tell me, growing my library of garden wisdom.

When my daughter was young, it was her turn to hear Caroline's story of the garden adventure. The drama unfolded as we planted, and then harvested together. Years later, living in the city during the pandemic, she was navigating a magnitude of systemic uncertainty the likes of which she'd never seen before. Her job, housing, school, and future plans became unknowns which recently had seemed so certain. Seeing the empty shelves in the grocery store, instead of retreating into sadness and screen-time, she dug out her small front yard and put in a vegetable garden. She was thrilled when the flowers bloomed, and the ladybugs arrived.

That garden became a bright light of inspiration in her neighborhood, and not long afterward, other neighbors began planting too, sharing seeds, exchanging tools and garden wisdom. These are their virus "victory" gardens, just like the WWII gardens when neighbors helped neighbors so everyone could be more resilient and self-sustaining.

Caroline's garden story shared a much bigger secret; when we plant a seed for food, friendship, or community, the harvest will be richer for the companions that help it thrive, the caring we bring to it, and the bounty it brings to us.

My grandmother is still gardening, but as her back stiffened over the years, she had to do things differently. I helped her plant a few tomatoes in pots on her porch in the spring.



She made sure we put some basil in each pot, so the companions are together. She calls it her little *kingdom of plenty*.

••• Robin Bush,
Community Education Director

Cultivating Island Senior Resources means growing our garden to be sustainable in a changing world.

Throughout our lives we do what is needed for healthy growth: we prepare and plant new seeds; we fertilize the future through the generosity of others; we face and respond to adversities when the winds blow. We are inspired by connection with others and the natural world, give and receive what matters most, and live with purpose. That's what it means to 'grow your gardens.'

Island Senior Resources is growing, with unwavering focus on assuring the long-term sustainability of essential services to our community. We are planting new fields in response to COVID-19 and growing a future that depends on resilience, connection, and an awe for this place we all call home.

Growing a Sustainable Future

COVID-19 planted the seeds for transformation.

Island Senior Resources is growing and nurturing the seeds we planted in 2020 when we radically changed how we delivered our programs and services thus ensuring access to them. We are using the COVID experience to re-imagine and re-align ISR for sustainability so that ISR will be serving seniors, adults with disabilities, and those that care for them for the coming decades.

We are asking ourselves these questions and more:

- What are our core services that our communities use most, from which they get the most significant value?
- What kind of facilities will best serve the needs of our programs and services, and how do we assure local access for the residents of Island and Camano Islands? How can we think more creatively and sustainably about facilities?
- After spending a year with many employees working from home, what kind of office space do we need? In adapting to COVID, have we discovered that we need less office space? Do we work more efficiently from home? What kind of workspaces do we need for our core services?

- What changes in organizational structure could better serve our communities and assure the sustainability of our programs? What do we need to prune, and what do we need to grow, to adapt to an increase in seniors in Island County?
- What funding will be required, and what do we know about existing and anticipated funding streams that will help to assure a sustainable future for ISR?

The board of directors and our leadership team are engaged in a multi-faceted planning process to address these questions and streamline our operations. We will plant new seeds for growth, trim and prune old ways of thinking and doing, and redesign ISR to sustainably meet the demands of Island County demographics. We will challenge each other and deeply consider alternatives. We expect to make key decisions during the summer of 2020 so that we are ready to bring a sustainable future to life.

We look forward to sharing our new vision of the ISR future with you in the fall of 2021.

... Cheryn Weiser,
Executive Director



Journal

ISR & THE PIONEER WAY

What is the Pioneer Way?

Pioneers face the unknown with only the journey's essentials, navigating in unfamiliar territory. They have the courage to let go of what was and reach for what's ahead. They seek new potential, with the conviction and resourcefulness to overcome even the greatest challenges. The pioneer is one who goes before to prepare the way for others that follow. They do what may never have been done before, or go where no one else has gone.

*"Find your **WHY** and you'll find your **WAY**."*

— John C. Maxwell

The pioneering spirit requires patience. It takes time to till new ground, plant the seed of an idea, then nurture it until it can be harvested.

As strong as the drive for exploration and innovation, the Pioneer Way also means being driven by what *doesn't change*, **no matter what**: the passionate dedication to purpose. In a world that champions innovation, it takes courage to remain true to purpose when the landscape changes.



Photo (right) by César Vonc from Pexels.

The Impossible Dream

As dawn lit the room, Rafael slowly opened his eyes. He'd been dreaming about running through the waves at a beach with his friend Pat when they were nearly 50 years younger, agile, with full heads of hair. Then he heard Pat laughing and knew it was time to get up, make breakfast, and get the wheelchair to move him to the kitchen.

Years before, Pat had been a photography guide on the Colorado, exploring the constantly changing, challenging, and unpredictable river. He taught people to see the magic in the natural world around them. Then, one rainy night, Rafael was driving Pat home after an expedition when a truck ran a stop sign. Their car was totaled; Pat never walked again.

Rafael had moved in to care for him after the accident and just stayed. Pat hadn't expected to live out his days in a chair, to need help to dress and eat, and manage his life. His passion for teaching was still strong though, and a new idea began to grow — he'd start an online school to teach others to take wildlife photos. It would be as challenging and unpredictable as the river had been, but he'd never been afraid of something new and he could do it from his wheelchair.

As Rafael stretched and sat up, he thought about all that had changed, but what was most important was all that had **not** changed. Pat was still generous, kind, and driven to be a guide to others. He might not be able to navigate a wild river, but Pat's joy in waking up each day had not changed. He still had the habit he'd begun in childhood of starting each day with a great big belly-laugh loud enough to shake the walls. He was steadfast in believing you could get through any challenge of the day, if you began it laughing. Rafael smiled. It would be another good day.



Press On

It was midnight. Stephanie was on deadline. The paper would go to press at 6 a.m., with or without her story. She'd left a steady job at a publishing house to start a new life as a freelance writer. This was her first story for the paper, about a photography guide who had seemingly lost everything after an accident years ago, then pioneered an entirely new life.

Stephanie still kept her grandpa's old Underwood typewriter on a shelf above her desk. He'd been a staff writer at the same paper. He'd written every story on that old typewriter, typed in triplicate with carbon paper between onion-skin paper. No mistakes; perfect copy every time. Today, so much is different. Every word Stephanie typed on her screen could be changed, whole sentences inserted, with a click.

She read and re-read her copy, changing a word here and there, then a quick spell-check and she was finished. She paused and looked up at the old Underwood. The newspaper had changed over the years, staff writers were replaced by freelancers, the recipes in the *Helen's Home Tips* section had come and gone, but one thing had not changed: every story has to be more than information; it has to mean something. It has to matter to the people who read it. That's what Grandpa always believed in, and she did too.

She smiled and pressed the submit button.

The Compass

In a world of changes, whether they happen by accident, choice, or opportunity, whether we are pioneering new directions or re-designing the destination, what endures is our dedication to purpose. That's what drives ISR as we face the challenge of navigating a path forward, one that assures long-term *sustainability* while striving to meet increasing community needs.

No matter the changes we navigate, we are here for the same purpose that the organization was founded on 49 years ago: seniors, adults with disabilities, and those who care for them need help navigating changes in *their* lives and circumstances. For each of us, how we do what we do changes with the times. After all, no one had email, websites, social media, or Zoom when ISR was born in 1972 — but nothing, absolutely nothing, has changed about *why* we are here.

"Clarity is the most important thing. I can compare clarity to pruning in gardening. You know, you need to be clear. If you are not clear, nothing is going to happen. You have to be clear. Then you have to be confident about your vision. And after that, you just have to put a lot of work in."

— Diane von Furstenberg



Island Senior Resources Mission:

We provide resources that enhance the emotional, social, and physical well-being of seniors, adults with disabilities, and those who care for them.

Join Us

Become a Funding Partner Today,

We all need a helping hand.

A small group of concerned citizens have pledged **\$140,000 in matching funds** to match your gift dollar for dollar through July!






Your gift will release these funds.

Charles LaFond 360-210-3011 (24/7 cell)
charles@islandseniorservices.org
www.senior-resources.org/donate to donate
online or become an Evergreen Monthly Donor



Your support funds impact like this.

In 2020, we...

-  provided **163** online support groups, reaching **1,288** adult day services clients
-  served and delivered more than **84,027** meals
-  mobilized more than **460** volunteers who gave **19,943** hours of their time
-  provided aging & disability resources to **2,163** clients over the course of **9,303** phone calls
-  drove clients to medical appointments across **117,728** miles, **enough miles to circle the earth nearly five times!**

Please let us be your hands, caring for people who need help.

We are surrounded by “happy” messages: Yellow smiley face stickers, “Happy Meal” ads, or songs like “Don’t Worry, Be Happy.” Being told to feel good, or Madison Avenue selling us happiness doesn’t help us reach that golden destination, especially in challenging times. Happiness is not something money can buy, can be imposed on us, or power can bring. It is a gift shared by word and deed; floating on the air, it goes everywhere. It is invisible but powerful and profound. Cultivating happiness for others is the heart of cultivating happiness in our own lives. It’s a feeling, not a destination, something we can grow and share by intentional actions, in spite of our own challenges.

**We asked our volunteers and members of our support groups,
“Where does happiness come from? How do you find happiness?
How do you cultivate it in others?”**

“I find happiness in the small moments. Seeing a bird, a flower, a sunrise or sunset, a smile. Giving hugs. Doing an act of kindness helps to brighten someone else’s day and brings happiness to yourself.”

—Katie Stewart, Langley

“Happiness comes from within...sharing a smile, kind word, or doing something simple to help another person brings happiness to your own heart.”

—Lisa, Oak Harbor

“Happiness finds you, you don’t find it, but you must welcome it when it rests its hand upon your shoulder and guides you where you may never have been before.”

—Anonymous, Oak Harbor

“Happiness comes from gratitude.”

—Donna, Clinton

“By giving! Most people, I think, find more joy in the reaction they see to gifts given, rather than to gifts received.”

—Anonymous, Coupeville

“Happiness is a gift... it’s long lived when it comes from the heart through love, and gratitude.”

—Anonymous, Clinton

“When life’s challenges—health, economic, isolation, or loss, threaten to overwhelm me, reaching out to others who are challenged and making their day a bit brighter shines light into my day and lifts my spirit.”

—Anonymous, Langley

What We Give to Each Other

I volunteer with ISR to provide medical transportation to my neighbors. The typical trip is picking up a neighbor from somewhere on Whidbey Island, transporting them to their medical appointment, then waiting until the appointment is over to transport them home. Waiting has been a wonderful time for me to take care of many things. Sometimes it's just catching up on reading. Sometimes it's a great time to reflect. But always the best part of the trip is getting the chance to have a conversation with my passenger.

Recently, I volunteered to take Mr. C to his doctor in the Mount Vernon area. That's a pretty good hike from where he lived — about an hour, so I was looking forward

to learning more about him and his time on the Island. I arrived at his place five minutes before the appointed time. That's typical for me; I want to be sure I'm ready to meet my client. Also, I don't want them to fear that I'm going to be late since I'm sure they have enough stress without worrying if they'll make their appointment on time.

While I waited, I noticed how cozy the location of his home felt. Tall evergreens all around. I noticed a madrona tree that, just like every madrona I've ever seen, was winding its way out of the forest of trees for its leaves to catch as much light as they can. I thought, "That will be a topic that I can bring up with Mr. C." I also thought, "Wow, after the windstorm that knocked out the power the day before, has he considered thinning those trees?" We had so much we could talk about. I was looking forward to this trip.

... Randall Weers, volunteer driver

ISR volunteer drivers help their passengers feel cared for. It is deeply meaningful to both drivers and passengers to share stories, memories, a laugh, or a smile. Connection is something we all *need*, not just desire. COVID has helped us focus on what matters most. There is much we cannot do, yet there is much we *can* do to add meaning to our lives by cultivating connections. Our community is our garden — small spots where good is grown and shared. Like companion plants, we do better together.

Grow the gift. Help cultivate our community and the harvest will be plentiful.

Island Senior Resources connects.

ISR needs drivers from across Whidbey Island, but especially from the Oak Harbor area where most of our Medical Transportation clients are located.



In 2020, during COVID, volunteer drivers provided **1,746 trips** for essential medical appointments, pharmacy pick-up, and groceries.

1,746

To inquire about volunteering, contact ISR's Medical Transportation and Volunteer Services Program at: 360-914-3212 or patweekley@islandseniorservices.org

PLEASE NOTE:

Island Senior Resources has strict guidelines for the health and safety of drivers and passengers, including wearing seat belts and masks, and maximizing the physical distance between passengers and drivers.

cultivating awe

The phone rang. *"I'm taking you on an awe-walk,"* Sal said to Frankie.

Sal knew that Frankie had been struggling with some tough challenges. Sal added, "Awe-walking is not a regular walk, it's taking a fresh look at the small things as you walk, to shift your perspective away from day-to-day life."

Sal had read about a study from the Memory and Aging Center at the University of California, San Francisco, that taught older walkers to cultivate awe. They asked half their study group to take a weekly 15-minute walk outside. The other half was asked to walk somewhere new each time, pay attention to details, and look at everything with fresh eyes. Both were asked to take a few selfie photos on their walks. After eight weeks, the two groups were compared. The awe-walkers focused on colors and natural changes. The control group focused on all the things they needed to do next week. The awe-walkers were happier. Their photos changed over the eight weeks too. The awe-walkers became smaller in their selfies, emphasizing the world around them. The control group photos didn't change.

Sal and Frankie arrived at a park they'd never visited, one with a path that was easy on Frankie's unstable feet. They stopped along their walk to look and listen. Sal noticed Frankie was standing more upright, and was more alert, calm, and his eyes were smiling. "Let's do this again," Frankie said. It had chased away the challenges that COVID has accentuated, even for a short while. Sal smiled. The awe-walk and the companionship *had* made a difference.

Awe does not come only to those who can walk outside. We can use any of our senses to cultivate awe. Have a friend collect a basket of things from nature. Blindfolded, take each item from the basket and feel them. Or open the window for 15 minutes at the same time each day and listen. Nature has a chorus of different voices, some as soft as the wind or as loud as the woodpecker. Each day even smells differ from the day before. The wind brings scents of frost, or rain, or blue sky and sunshine. Breathe deeply of the tonic.

Plant a seed of nature into your day. Challenges may become a little easier to manage when you cultivate awe of the world around you.

Reference: *NYtimes.com* Sept 30, 2020.

"Those who dwell, as scientists or laymen, among the beauties and mysteries of the earth are never alone or weary of life."

"Whatever the vexations or concerns of their personal lives, their thoughts can find paths that lead to inner contentment and to renewed excitement in living."

"Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts."

— Rachel Carson,
"The Sense of Wonder"



THE WORLD-WIDE-WOODS

On a walk with Dr. Simard she gestures from the fungus she uncovers toward a nearby 100 ft. hemlock and a cluster of seedlings. The mycorrhizal fungal network links the tree to the seedlings. In one study of Douglas firs, she found every large older tree was, “linked to 47 other trees and is projected to be connected to at least 250 more; and seedlings that had full access to the fungal network were 26% more likely to survive than those that did not.”** The oldest, largest, trees share their carbon through the mycorrhizal network, even moving nutrients

Suzanne's Simard's childhood home was the magical realm of Canada's old-growth forests of towering conifers and sheltered ferns. Romping through the wet, gathering mosses and fiddleheads, or laying on the forest floor staring up at the crown of the giants, she was in the embrace of the forest. Dr. Simard is now a professor of forest ecology and a renowned expert on plant communication at the University of British Columbia. She has uncovered the literal root of the magic. Hidden from our eyes, in the underground, are fungal threads forming a communications network between nearly every tree.

Forest science has long held that trees are solitary individuals that compete for resources of light, nutrients, and space. Dr. Simard has shown that the forest is “a vast, ancient, intricate society. There is conflict in a forest, but there is also negotiation, reciprocity, and perhaps even selflessness. The trees, understory plants, fungi, and microbes in a forest are so thoroughly connected, communicative, and codependent that some scientists have described them, [the forests], as superorganisms.” (The Social Life of Trees, *New York Times*, 12.2.20) “Through back-and-forth conversations they increase the resilience of the whole community,” she says in her 2016 TED talk.

In the forest, it's not uncommon to see a decaying log covered in mosses, ground blackberry, and cedar seedlings, and to discover beneath it a network of yellow fungal filaments.

as needed back and forth between dormant and non-dormant trees. It's a living system of connected reliance that is complex and collaborative.

Trees tell a story of endurance over millennia by depending on each other. In Herman Hesse's 1920 “Wandering: Notes and Sketches,” he writes of the history told in the rings of a tree, a record of its struggles, sicknesses, and prosperity. The hardest are the ones that when faced with the greatest challenges grow tighter rings for strength and become more resilient. Dr. Simard's research asks us to see that resilience doesn't come only from individual strength but the strength of reliance on supportive trees.

Like the forest, we are strongest when we rely on one another for support. We too are individuals who thrive



when we rely on each other. The woods, worldwide, in the Pacific Northwest, the jungles of Borneo, or along the treelined streets of neighborhoods, gives us reason to look beneath the surface and see the web beneath our feet that connects us to each other.

Island Senior Resources is the web that connects everyone in our community, regardless of age, ability, or need. Whether through delivering food and friendship to nourish isolated individuals, creating connection through our online virtual community, or providing a safe sharing space in support groups, we are here to strengthen the bonds between us, recognizing individual and shared needs. We are here to support you in the life challenges you face and cultivate the companionship that nourishes and sustains the connections that make our community strong. *We are your garden.*

••• Robin Bush, Community Education Director

References:

***Inspired by "The Social Life of Forests" by Ferris Jabr, NY Times, Dec. 2, 2020*

Simard's 2016 TED talk at ted.com "How Trees Talk to Each Other"

"The Secrets of the Wood Wide Web" by Robert Macfarlane, The New Yorker, Aug. 7, 2016

YOU ARE WELCOME HERE.



YOU ARE SAFE HERE.

YOUR NEEDS ARE
IMPORTANT.

Island Senior Resources connects.



Support Groups Cultivate Connection and Understanding.

"Parkinson's is a progressively disabling neurological disease that I was diagnosed with about five years ago. Today I feel exceedingly fortunate that I'm otherwise in good health. I have the love and support of my wife of fifty-four years, my family, friends, and access to excellent medical care.

Like most people who learn unwelcome news like this, I found out all I could about my disease as quickly as I could. I underscore the word my because we who have it soon find out that the course of our disease does not usually follow a predictable path for everyone. The progression of symptoms doesn't follow the same order, and because of this, each of us wonders, '... is this because of Parkinson's, or part of a person's normal aging process, or something else?'

That's where participation in a support group like the one ISR facilitates really proves its value. It gives you access to a community of people who will share the kind of practical experience that helps you to better understand and cope with your disease. That's the kind of knowledge there's simply no substitute for!"

— Steve Burr, a participant in the ISR Parkinson's Support Group

Information on the ISR support groups can be found in the *virtual community* section of our website: www.senior-resources.org/virtual-community

**You are welcome here. You are safe here.
Your needs are important.**

We at Island Senior Resources value, respect, and support individuals of every race, color, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, ability, age, socio-economic status, religion, non-religion, and national origin, who make up the whole of our community.

Island Senior Resources Board of Directors

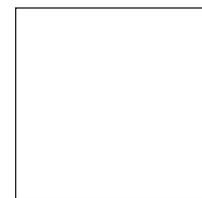
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*Island Senior Resources is the trade name
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facebook.com/islandseniors
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Our Locations

Island Senior Resources (Bayview)

14594 SR 525
Langley, WA 98260
Just south of Bayview Road

Island Senior Resources (Oak Harbor)

in collaboration with
The Center in Oak Harbor
51 SE Jerome St.
Oak Harbor, WA 98277
Opposite OH Elementary School

Island Senior Resources (Camano)

in collaboration with Camano Center
606 Arrowhead Rd.
Camano Island, WA 98282
By Utsalady School

Senior Thrift

5518 Woodard Rd.
Freeland, WA 98249
Just north of Main Street

Cultivate Your Connections in our Virtual Community:

[www.senior-resources.org/
virtual-community](http://www.senior-resources.org/virtual-community)

Please support Island Senior Resources today with your gift.
Your caring is what sustains us!

