



A community-based newspaper serving the Puget Sound area since 1981



The Voice

February
2016
*Articles translated
into six languages*

The newspaper of Neighborhood House — visit our website at www.voice.seattlehousing.net

SHA marks two milestones at Yesler

BY SEATTLE HOUSING AUTHORITY

Raven Terrace, the second new Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) residential building opened as part of SHA's redevelopment of Yesler Terrace, is now accepting residents.

People who were temporarily relocated due to demolition of aging housing at Yesler Terrace and residents who want to move from buildings at Yesler Terrace slated for future replacement have priority for apartments at Raven Terrace. SHA is also accepting applications from income-eligible individuals and families who will be new to the Yesler community.

Yesler Terrace was the city's first public housing, built 75 years ago by the then newly established Seattle Housing Authority.

Please see "Milestones" on Page 3



PHOTO BY NANCY GARDNER

Raven Terrace, SHA's most recently completed construction project, began leasing units to residents last month. Located at the corner of Yesler Way and 8th Avenue, 50 of the 83 apartments replace public housing units that were demolished in Yesler Terrace.

Help celebrate new Yesler additions

Seattle Housing Authority is hosting a Raven Terrace Grand Opening, **Friday, Feb. 5** from 10 a.m. to noon, with building tours and light refreshments. An official opening ceremony and ribbon cutting with public officials, funders and resident speakers will take place from 10:30-11:00 a.m. in the Community Room at Raven Terrace, which is located at 820 Yesler Way.

On **Saturday, Feb. 13** at 10 a.m. SHA will host a grand opening of the 10th Ave S Hillclimb, scheduled to coincide with the beginning of the Chinatown International District Business Improvement Area Lunar New Year celebration. The Hillclimb plaza is accessed by going south from the Yesler Community Center along 10th Ave S or north from 10th Avenue S and S Jackson.

Application deadlines approach for SHA, state and national education scholarships

BY VOICE STAFF

The start of a new year means students are that much closer to graduating to the next class level or are thinking of applying to college. Nearly every student is eligible for some form of financial aid. Students who may not be eligible for need-based aid may still be eligible for an unsubsidized Stafford Loan regardless of income or circumstances.

Financial aid and scholarships can significantly ease the burden of paying for college. The following scholarships and application information can help you get started on the process of pursuing higher education, but keep in mind there are many others out there.

State and national aid Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

Applications for the 2016-17 academic year are now being accepted for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA.

Completing the application is the first step in applying for any college assistance.

To be eligible to receive federal student aid, you must:

- Be a citizen or eligible non-citizen of the United States.
- Have a valid Social Security Number
- Have a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) certificate, or have completed home schooling. If you don't, you may still be eligible for federal student aid if you were enrolled in college or career school prior to July 1, 2012.
- Be enrolled in an eligible program as a regular student seeking a degree or certificate.

Visit www.fafsa.org to learn more about other requirements. Filing early may increase the amount students will receive.

Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA)

On Feb. 26, 2014, Gov. Jay Inslee signed the Dream Act, known in Washington State as the Real Hope Act, into law. This law allows undocumented non-citizens, who are unable to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) due to immigration status, to apply for state financial

aid through the Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) application. Some of the eligibility requirements include the following:

- Must have graduated from a Washington high school or obtained a GED (or will do so before starting college)
- Must have lived in Washington for three years prior to, and continuously since, earning a high school diploma or equivalent

Students should apply online for state aid at www.readyssetgrad.org/WASFA.

For questions about the WASFA application, contact Financial Aid at 360-417-6390 or the Washington Student Achievement Council at 360-753-7800.

Another excellent resource is **WashBoard, (www.washboard.org)**, which provides a vast number of local and state scholarships and application instructions. The site is a free, searchable scholarship-matching clearinghouse for Washington residents and students attending college in Washington.

Please see "Scholarships" on Page 3

Mayor seeks new SHA commissioner

BY SEATTLE HOUSING AUTHORITY

One of the current resident commissioners is stepping down from the Seattle Housing Authority Board of Commissioners and Mayor Ed Murray is seeking a replacement from among SHA residents. The Board of Commissioners is responsible for approving SHA's annual budget, and for setting policies that guide SHA's operation.

This volunteer position requires an individual who is willing to commit 10 to 12 hours per month in preparing for and attending meetings. The Board meets monthly on the third Monday of the month beginning at 5 p.m. Meetings are usually held at SHA's Central Office at 190 Queen Anne Ave N on Lower Queen Anne in Seattle. Transportation reimbursement is available.

In addition to regular Board meetings, commissioners are expected to attend a briefing at 8:30 a.m. on the second Monday of the month, as well as occasional other public hearings or briefings.

Interested candidates can submit a resume and cover letter to Amanda Hohlfeld amanda.hohlfeld@seattle.gov or by mail: Amanda Hohlfeld c/o Office of the Mayor, P.O. Box 94749, Seattle, WA 98124.

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Health Notes

R A column devoted to your well-being

A Valentine's reminder to take care of your

BY NEIGHBORCARE HEALTH

The heart may be a symbol of love, but it's actually a hardworking muscle with a big responsibility to keep you strong and healthy. Your heart pumps oxygen and blood throughout your body and beats about 50-70 times per minute.

Here are some ways to treat your heart with a little TLC to prevent heart disease:

Watch your blood pressure

Blood pressure measures the force at which your heart pumps blood through your body. When blood pressure is too high, it means that the heart is working too hard to pump that blood. High blood pressure is the leading cause of heart disease in the U.S.

People with high blood pressure are three times more likely to die from heart disease. It's important to have your blood pressure checked regularly, especially if you have a history of high blood pressure, or someone in your family does. Local fire departments offer free blood pressure checks, and the results are usually more reliable than machines found in supermarkets and malls.

It's never too late to set a goal with your health care provider to lower your blood pressure through exercise, diet, medication and other lifestyle changes.

Eat healthy

One of the best ways to support your heart is to eat plenty of healthy, nutritious foods like fresh fruits and vegetables, lean protein, and whole grains. Avoid large amounts of processed foods high in salt, saturated fat and cholesterol like frozen dinners. The cholesterol and fat in these foods can damage your heart and arteries, which supply blood throughout your body.

One way to eat healthy on a budget is to shop at local farmers markets. These markets accept EBT and will double your EBT money. This means you'll get \$20 worth of

market produce when you spend \$10. Find your local farmers market at www.seattle-farmersmarkets.org.

Manage stress

When you feel stressed, so does your heart. Ongoing stress from work and home can be hard on your body. Some stress is unavoidable, but there are ways to counteract the affects. Are there adjustments you can make in your life to reduce stress? Daily practices such as meditation, tai chi, qigong and yoga can help reduce stress.

You can find instructional videos online or free and inexpensive phone apps to guide you through meditation. Another important way to manage stress and improve heart health is to exercise regularly—even 20 minutes of walking per day can help keep your overall health in check.

Reduce the use of nicotine

Smoking, including cigarettes, vaporizer ("vape") pens and other nicotine-based products, damages your heart, lungs and blood vessels. Smoking is one of the leading causes of heart disease, heart attacks and other chronic illnesses. Quitting can be hard but there are many resources available to help. Talk to your primary health care provider about support and learn more at www.kingcounty.gov/healthservices/health/tobacco/quitting-tobacco.aspx

Remember to take care of yourself and those you love this February and invest in your heart health.

Neighborcare Health is the largest provider of primary medical and dental care in Seattle for low-income and uninsured families and individuals, serving our community for more than 40 years. More information is available at www.neighborcare.org.

Be Safe

Public transportation safety tips

BY JOE TRENKENSCHUH

Seattle Neighborhood Group

Many people use public transportation throughout Seattle, and those who don't ride are still exposed to it, whether they like it or not.

Safety for bus riders is just as important as that of pedestrians, or those driving next to or behind buses. There are simple measures you can take to stay safe on the bus. King County Metro reminds riders to "Be Safe, Be Seen, Be Smart." Doing so will help ensure a safe journey to your destination.

Be safe

Always be aware of your surroundings while on the bus. If there is suspicious activity taking place, distance yourself from it as quickly as possible. Sitting closer to the front of the bus is usually safer. It also provides you with a quick escape off the bus if need be.

While on the bus, hold on to your belongings and keep your bag in front of you, especially if standing up. Riders are often unaware of their surroundings and do not protect their belongings when distracted by electronics or conversations. When waiting at the bus stop, keep personal belongings stored and out of site.

Be seen

Bus stops can be vulnerable to criminal activities like theft and assault, so always try to wait in well-lit areas or with a friend during the early morning hours or at night. When you do get on the bus, always stand clear when the doors are opening and closing in order to help the driver make timely stops. Watch for bicyclists, cars and other pedestrians when exiting.



Be smart

If you are running late or see your bus pulling away before you are able to board, do not chase after the bus—and above all don't not run alongside it or cross in front of it. The bus driver will not be able to see you in their blind spots and you pose a serious risk to others around you or drivers focused on the road, and not watching for you. Drivers turn their attention to the road and traffic once the bus is moving and are not permitted to stop and pick up riders outside of a bus stop.

Bike and wheelchair safety

When loading your bike onto the bus make sure to do so from the curb side so passing by traffic doesn't hit you. Metro requires bike riders to sit near the front of the bus to prevent theft. Wheelchair or walker users should always ask for the driver's help in securing devices. And when disembarking in the downtown area Metro bus tunnel, note that bike loading and unloading is allowed only at Convention Place and International District stations.

And remember that Transit Police are helping ensure your safety by patrolling the Metro system by bus, on bike and by car.

Joe Trenkenschuh (joe@sngi.org, 206-323-7094) is a project coordinator at Seattle Neighborhood Group. Feel free to contact him for crime prevention tips or help with safety and security concerns.

RV hosts monthly SPD meeting Feb. 12

Pierce Murphy, director of the Office of Professional Accountability, will be guest speaker at Rainier Vista's next Community Coffee Hour Feb. 12 from 6 - 8 p.m.

Community Coffee Hour is held the second Friday of each month, and is hosted by members of the Seattle Police Department in conjunction with the Seattle Housing Authority.

The focus of Murphy's presentation will be "Learning how to file a police complaint."

Coffee Hour is held at in the Snoqualmie Room at Rainier Vista, 2917 South Snoqualmie Street.

Future meetings will feature different community leaders and topics. Here are upcoming dates:

March 11, 6 - 8 p.m.

April 8, 6 - 8 p.m.

May 13, 6 - 8 p.m.

To request an interpreter, contact Jen Calleja, SHA, 206-722-4010 ext. 12.

Community Notes

First Hill Streetcar up and running

Seattle's Streetcar serving the First Hill community began transporting riders Jan. 23 and is expected to give free rides for the next few weeks. Funded by Sound Transit, the First Hill Streetcar connects the diverse and vibrant neighborhoods of Capitol Hill, First Hill, the Central District, Little Saigon, Chinatown-International District, and Pioneer Square. An official community celebration will take place soon.

Norm Mah, a spokesman for the Seattle Department of Transportation (SDOT) said the color schemes on the cars were chosen carefully.

"They are meant to represent characteristics of the neighborhoods that the First Hill line travels through, so the blue streetcar represents babies born at First Hill hospitals, the pink for Capitol Hill, gold represents Pioneer Square's Klondike gold rush days, red and yellow for traditional Chinese and Asian colors, and Amazon's burnt orange."

Dept. of Neighborhoods Large Project Fund Workshop Feb. 23

Seattle Department of Neighborhoods provides funds for community programs, including a Large Project Fund that awards up to \$100,000 for people who want to build stronger and healthier communities.

Neighborhood-based groups, community-based organizations, ad-hoc groups and business groups who want to do a project must attend one of five mandatory workshops in order for an application to be considered. The next free workshop is Feb. 23, 6 - 8 p.m. and you must pre-register in order to attend. The deadline to apply for a Large Project Fund is May 2.

To be considered, projects must meet the following requirements:

- Provide a public benefit and be free and open to all members of the public
- Emphasize self-help, with project ideas initiated, planned and implemented by the neighbors and community members who will themselves be impacted by the project
- Demonstrate community match
- Occur within the Seattle city limits

Applications will be reviewed and awarded by a panel of city staff members.

For more information, visit www.seattle.gov/neighborhoods or contact Alvin Edwards, project manager, 206-733-9916, or alvin.edwards@seattle.gov.

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The Voice

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The Voice, the newspaper of Neighborhood House, is published monthly with the support of Seattle Housing Authority. Neighborhood House helps diverse communities of people with limited resources attain their goals for self-sufficiency, financial independence and community building. The Voice contributes to that mission by providing low-income people, immigrants, refugees and other concerned parties with timely, relevant news. Opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect those of the staff, Neighborhood House or Seattle Housing Authority. We welcome articles and tips from the community and reserve the right to edit all submissions. The Voice is published online at www.nhwa.org and at www.seattlehousing.org.

Scholarships

Continued from Page 1

Last year, more than 400 different types of these scholarships worth \$41 million dollars were awarded to about 3,000 applicants.

The National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA)

NAHMA offers scholarships of at least \$2,000 to high school seniors, high school graduates, or adults who hold a high school diploma or GED certificate.

This is a great program to help students or adults start college or receive support while already attending college. This application, which can only be completed online, has a **May 29, 2016 deadline**.

Scholarships for SHA residents

The Higher Education Project, in partnership with the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA), is offering several different scholarships for students and residents who live in assisted housing through SHA. Students may apply for more than one scholarship.

Dream Big! Scholarship

The Dream Big! \$1,000 scholarship is open to SHA residents and Housing Choice Voucher Program participants (including students under age 21) in Seattle. The application can be found at www.seattlehousing.org/residents/education/scholarships/. The Dream Big! application is **due by March 31, 2016**. This scholarship is awarded to a



minimum of two applicants each year.

For more information about this scholarship, residents should contact SHA Housing Operations Advisor Courtney Cameron at courtney.cameron@seattlehousing.org or 206-239-1724.

Housing Authority Insurance Group Scholarships (HAIG)

In 2016, the Housing Authority Insurance Group will offer 50 scholarships valued at \$2,500 per scholarship for individuals who are pursuing any kind of higher education program at a college or university, or trade/professional school or institute and are issued before the fall semester of the current year. The entry process is simple: visit www.housingcenter.com/Affordable-Housing-Resident-Scholarships, and fill out the entry form. If you don't have access to the Internet, call 800-873-0242, ext. 639 or e-mail affordablescholarship@housingcenter.com for a paper application.

Entries are **due by Saturday, April 30, 2016**. All of the entries will be placed into a drawing and selected randomly. Applicants will be notified by e-mail.

Milestones

Continued from Page 1

The redevelopment of Yesler Terrace began in 2013 after SHA, Yesler residents, a Citizens Review Committee, surrounding neighbors, city officials, nonprofit service partners and citizens at large shaped a plan for replacing Yesler Terrace's aging housing with a vibrant new community for Yesler residents and adding a significant amount of new housing for people across a spectrum of income levels.

The future look of Yesler Terrace

When completed, Yesler Terrace will have up to 5,000 apartments, a 1.8-acre central park, three pocket or mini parks, a half-mile "Green Street" loop, a new landscaped stair and ramp connection to the Chinatown International District and Little Saigon, community gardening areas, retail businesses and office space.

The community will continue to offer low-income residents a wide range of services to help them with increased education, health and employment opportunities.

Raven Terrace, located at 820 Yesler Way, was named for a bird symbolic in many cultures and the symbol of "storyteller" in the Duwamish Tribe. It has a total of 83 apartments, a community room, and a central courtyard with access off a pedestrian pathway that will run diagonally across the Yesler neighborhood, connecting with First Hill to the north and Chinatown International District and Little Saigon to the south.

For leasing information, call the Yesler Terrace Property Management Office at 206-223-3758 or visit www.seattlehousing.org.

SHA's first new residential building at Yesler, Kebero Court, opened in Spring 2015 and is fully occupied. A kebero is a musical hand drum used by East African cultures.

Hoa Mai Gardens and 10th Ave. S Hillclimb projects

The next residential building scheduled to open in Yesler after Raven Terrace is Hoa Mai Gardens. It is currently under construction at 221 10th Avenue South and, when completed in late 2016, will provide 111 apartments for low-income residents.

10th Ave. S. Hillclimb opens Feb. 13

The much anticipated 10th Ave S Hillclimb, an outdoor pedestrian thoroughfare that connects the First Hill and Yesler neighborhoods to nearby Chinatown International District and Little Saigon, will have a grand opening on Feb. 13.

It features a staircase, ramp, landscaping, 24-hour lighting and a gathering plaza. The Hillclimb features 25 colorful, two to four-foot mosaic medallions along the route, created by artist Mauricio Robalino, with design ideas from Yesler residents. Robalino incorporates symbols of the past and the future of the Yesler community. A theme featuring a raven unites the pieces into a cohesive work of traditional art.

Cultural Center celebrates Black History Month with Yesler Terrace resident's work



In honor of February's Black History Month, the James and Janie Washington Cultural Center will be showing works including 'Black Southerner,' pictured above, by Charles Parrish, artist and Yesler Terrace resident, through Feb. 28. An opening reception for Parrish will be held from 2 until 5 p.m. on Sunday, Feb. 14.

James Washington, Jr. was an African-American sculptor and painter who was born and raised in Mississippi and moved to Washington state in 1944. His house and studio, where the Cultural Center now stands, has been an official Seattle city landmark since 1992.

The center is located at 1816 26th Ave. in Seattle's Central District.

Yesler Terrace redevelopment continues with Hoa Mai Gardens

BY SVEN KOEHLER
Seattle Housing Authority

Anyone with a green thumb knows that good soil is the basis for a thriving garden. So it makes sense that the large, muddy hole behind Yesler Community Center is the foundation for a place called Ho Mai Gardens. Except this garden isn't just for flowers. It will also help nurture a thriving community for people of all ages to call home.

The name Hoa Mai refers to a beautiful yellow flower that is part of Lunar New Year celebrations in Vietnam and will be appropriately located on the border of the Little Saigon community.

Hoa Mai Gardens is located on the corner of the newly- configured sections of South Washington Street and 10th Avenue S, and will have underground parking for residents. A new neighborhood park under construction in Yesler Terrace is close by. The park design includes a large playground and protected soccer area and will likely appeal to families and kids.

The building may be the most family-oriented of the first four buildings of the redevelopment, says Stephanie Van Dyke, Seattle Housing Authority's (SHA) director of development. To date, most new apartments are one-bedroom units. But more than half the apartments at Hoa Mai Gardens will be two- three- and four-bedroom units designed for families, similar to the row houses that once stood in their place.

When it opens in mid-2017, Hoa Mai Gardens will offer a mix of affordable housing types. Seventy of the apartments will replace public housing that was demolished for the redevelopment and these residents will continue to pay 30 percent of their in-



COURTESY OF SMR ARCHITECTS

Construction is now underway on Hoa Mai Gardens, the fourth replacement housing building under construction in the Yesler Terrace redevelopment. This six-story building will provide affordable housing to 111 households. The building will be adjacent to the future neighborhood park and 10th Ave S Hillclimb.

come for rent. The remaining 41 apartments will be available to new residents who earn below 60 percent of the area median income, with low fixed rents set by the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program.

"While the construction site is just a big hole in the ground now, the project will start looking more like a building soon," says Labor Foreman Mitcheal Cheatham. A tower crane was erected in mid-January to begin above-ground operations. Sitting atop the crane is the same large red letter 'A' representing Andersen Construction which was the contractor for nearby Kebero Court.

Cheatham also worked on the Kebero

Court project, and says he's happy to be back at Yesler Terrace. "I am a proud product of SHA's Section 3 labor force agreement," he says, referring to the program that offers new job opportunities to low-income residents. Cheatham was first hired by Andersen Construction at SHA's Lake City Court, constructed in North Seattle in 2010.

He says he feels especially rewarded when working on family-centric, residential projects, and is pleased when he notices residents living in neighboring apartments or kids at the Yesler Community Center

Please see "Hoa Mai" on Page 6

Two free transportation services serve vital purposes

Need a lift to the doctor, grocery store or hot meal program? Help is just a phone call away

By CELESTE ENDLICH

Sound Generations Transportation

For many elderly or handicapped people, mobility issues are often a barrier to living a fulfilling life.

Sound Generations, formerly known as Senior Services, is a comprehensive non-profit agency that assists these vulnerable populations with transportation issues, thereby enhancing their emotional, social and physical well-being.

Volunteer Transportation program

We understand that being able to get to the doctor and other various medical treatments and services is crucial for helping with quality of life. This is why the Volunteer Transportation program exists, and it utilizes volunteer drivers who operate their own vehicles to take seniors to and from medical appointments.

Our volunteers offer not only complimentary rides, but can help seniors check in and will remain in the waiting room until their appointments are over.

However, it is important to note that advanced planning is required. The program's ride request deadline is always by the Tuesday the week before the appointment. Last-minute or same-week requests cannot be fulfilled.

When requesting a ride to an appointment, customers must call at least three days prior to the appointment.

To be eligible for Volunteer Transportation you must meet the following criteria:

- Be age 60 or older
- Live in King County
- Be able to get into the volunteer's vehicle without assistance
- Have limited transportation options

Hyde Shuttles service

Additionally, Sound Generations also offers the Hyde Shuttle service, which is a door-to-door, wheelchair-equipped shuttle



COURTESY OF SOUND GENERATIONS

Many area residents are eligible to use two free services to help them get around: Volunteer Transportation and Hyde Shuttles, operated by Sound Generations, a local non-profit agency that serves older adults and those with disabilities.

that can help people run errands or go on outings within their neighborhoods. For example, the shuttle can take you shopping, to a senior lunch program, or to simply visit a friend. Advanced planning is also required with this service, as one must request a ride by noon at least three days before the anticipated ride.

Hyde Shuttles does not run in every neighborhood in King County, but does operate in most areas where SHA residents live, including Beacon Hill, the Central District, First Hill, Queen Anne, and West Seattle, to name just a few locations.

To be eligible for Hyde Shuttles you must be:

- Someone with a disability
- Age 55 or older

Both programs have no forms to fill out; one can simply sign up over the phone by answering questions and providing necessary information. Interpretive services are available for non-English speaking clients. To access language interpretation, clients who contact us need to state their requested language. A scheduler will add an interpreter to the phone call to help.

For complete transportation program details visit www.soundgenerations.org or contact Volunteer Transportation, 206-448-5740 or Hyde Shuttles, 206-727-6262.

If you're interested in being a volunteer, call Hilary Case, recruitment and outreach coordinator, 206-748-7588 or email hilaryc@soundgenerations.org.

Shuttles to local meal programs

Hyde Shuttles transports seniors to hot meal programs at numerous locations throughout King County, including locations listed below.

Call 206-727-6262 or 1-877-415-3632 for information on sites and days of service.

Central Area Senior Center
www.centralareaseniorcenter.org
500 30th Ave S
Seattle, WA 98144
206-726-4926

Lake City Community Center
www.hungerintervention.org
12531 28th Avenue NE
Seattle, WA 98125
206-317-1979

Senior Center of West Seattle
www.scwestseattle.org
4217 SW Oregon St.
Seattle, WA 98116
206-932-4044

Southeast Seattle Senior Center
www.sscs.org
4655 South Holly Street
Seattle, WA 98118
206-722-0317

Asian Counseling and Referral Service
2339 Martin Luther King Way S,
Seattle, WA 98144
206-695-7600

El Centro de la Raza
2526 16th Avenue South,
Seattle, WA 98144
206-957-4634



Housing and Homelessness Advocacy Day 2016

Tuesday, February 2
Olympia, Washington



On Tuesday, February 2, 2016, more than 600 housing and homelessness advocates from across Washington will gather in Olympia for a powerful day of action!

Join us as we call for an end to homelessness in our state!

Advocacy Day Includes

- Inside information on housing and homelessness policy
- Workshops on how to be an effective advocate
- Meetings with your lawmakers - (don't worry, we'll prep you with documents and talking points)
- The opportunity to be a significant part of a growing movement for affordable housing and an end to homelessness

Because everyone deserves the opportunity to live in a safe, healthy, affordable home.



WASHINGTON LOW INCOME
Housing Alliance

Online Registration Now Open!
<http://bit.ly/HHADreg2016>

More Information

Check www.WLIHA.org/HHAD for updates!

Questions?

Contact Alouise Urness at alouise@wliha.org, or 206.442.9455 x203



Volunteer at Advocacy Day!

We need volunteers to help Advocacy Day run smoothly.

To sign up as a Legislative District Lead or an Advocacy Steward check 'volunteer' on your registration form.

Visit www.WLIHA.org/HHAD for more info!

Visit our website:
voice.seattlehousing.net

- Exclusive content
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PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHAEL MAGGS / WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

About The Voice

The Voice is a monthly newspaper published by Neighborhood House with financial support from Seattle Housing Authority. The Voice is developed and edited by Neighborhood House with help from Seattle Housing residents and staff. It strives to provide a forum for objective news and information of interest to low-income people and those living in Seattle Housing communities.

If you'd like to submit an article, or if you have a question about anything you've read in this publication, please contact Editor Nancy Gardner at 206-461-8430, ext. 2051 or by e-mail at nancyg@nhwa.org.

All submissions are subject to editing for accuracy, style and length.



Money Matters How is your credit? Understanding credit scores

BY EDISON DE IMPALA
Financial Empowerment Center

Your credit history is important to you and to a lot of people as well, including banks, mortgage lenders, utility companies and prospective employers.

Clients visiting the Seattle Financial Empowerment Center (FEC) have individual concerns about debts, savings and credit, but many share the same general questions concerning the value and importance of credit reports and credit scores.

The following are the most common questions we receive about credit scoring:

What does a credit score tell potential lenders?

Your likelihood of repaying a loan. Your credit score will give potential lenders a glimpse into how responsible you are with money as well as how risky it would be for them to extend credit to you. Generally, a bad credit score (when it comes to the base FICO scoring system, this would be anything below 500 on a scale of 300 to 850) indicates that you're having difficulty paying bills on time or at all.

Can one late payment affect my credit score?

Yes. A single late payment might decrease your credit score. Also, a late fee could be charged, interest rates may rise, and it may

end up on your credit report for seven years.

How can I raise my credit score?

You can raise your credit score by paying in full and on time your credit cards and loans, keeping balances low, and fixing credit report errors.

Can a potential employer see my credit score?

No. An employer cannot access your credit score, only your report. Employers receive an amended version called an employment credit report.

How long does a Chapter 7 bankruptcy filing stay on my credit report?

A Chapter 7 bankruptcy filing, which wipes most of your debt clean, stays on your credit report for 10 years. A Chapter 13 bankruptcy filing, which requires repayment of some of the debt, stays on your credit report for seven years.

If I get married, does my credit report and score automatically change?

No. Your credit report will not change unless you open a joint account or your spouse is an authorized user. There is no such thing as a combined credit score.

How often can I receive a free copy of my credit report?

Every 12 months you can obtain one. Under the Fair Credit Reporting Act, consumers are entitled to one free credit report from each of the three major credit reporting agencies (Experian, Equifax, and TransUnion) per year.

Will an inquiry affect my credit score?

It depends. There are two different types of inquiries — hard and soft. Hard inquiries are the ones that affect your score. This type of inquiry occurs as a result of a lender reviewing your credit after you apply for services such as a credit card or auto loan. Generally, you'll lose about 5-10 points during this process. A soft inquiry is any credit inquiry in which your credit is not under review by a potential lender for example, when you check your own credit, and you won't lose any points.

Can credit counseling lower my credit score?

No. Consulting with a credit counselor will not reduce your score. The decisions you make after meeting with one, however, could. A credit counselor will go over options with you; among them are debt settlement and debt repayment (known as a debt management program or DMP). If you can afford to pay off your debt in smaller chunks, entering a debt management program is usually the way to go.

Debt settlement is a different issue; going this route will have a negative impact on your credit score. When you settle an account with a credit card issuer, it is updated on your credit reports as either a 'partial payment plan' or 'settlement accepted by creditor.' Both of those notations are considered negative by credit scoring systems and can lower your credit scores.



SPL's student essay competition open through March 15

Seattle high school seniors and college undergraduates are invited to enter an essay scholarship competition created by The Seattle Public Library Foundation to honor civic leader Stimson Bullitt.

The competition is open to high school seniors and college undergraduate students who live, work or attend school in Seattle. Participants must have a Library card issued by The Seattle Public Library.

The third annual Stimson Bullitt Civic Courage Scholarship seeks essays that explore civic courage. Essays may be submitted online through March 15, 2016 at www.civiccouragescholarship.com. Three scholarships will be awarded: the author of the winning essay will receive \$5,000, and the authors of the two second-place essays will each receive \$2,500.

Bullitt, who died in 2009, was a lawyer, decorated soldier, outdoorsman, civil rights activist, developer, philanthropist, broadcaster, environmentalist and community leader in Seattle. He believed that courageous civic leadership could improve the lives of people in our community now and in the future.



Community Living Connections

Good news—Community Living Connections is now available throughout King County! Adults dealing with aging or disability issues now have easier access to services and information. Community Living Connections staff are highly trained and skilled at finding people the right kind of help, where and when they need it.

If you or someone you know is facing aging or disability issues, contact Community Living Connections:

206-962-8467
1-844-348-5464 (toll free)

All calls to the Community Living Connections line are free and confidential.

Our staff will help you figure out the kind of assistance that meets your needs. One of the many benefits of Community Living Connections is that we offer access to a network of services and providers close to your community.

Q&A

What is Community Living Connections?

It's a network of advocates for adults facing aging or disability issues. Community Living Connections provides anyone who calls a caring, highly-trained specialist who will give them easy access to information, individual consultation and service options. Often, we can connect people with services close to their home, reducing stress and travel time.

Who is able to receive help?

While our services are geared toward those needing help with aging or disability issues, Community Living Connections staff will help anyone who calls.

How reliable is your network?

Community Living Connections provides the most comprehensive, reliable network for aging and disability services in the King County area. Our highly-trained staff and network of providers are supported by a broad base of funders giving us the ability to offer people a variety of options for programs and services.

How much does it cost?

Calls are free and confidential.

How do I get help?

Call Community Living Connections at 206-962-8467 or toll free 1-844-348-5464.

RAINIER VISTA

Lunar New Year Celebration MỪNG TẾT NGUYÊN ĐÁN



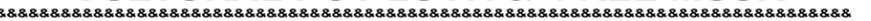
PLEASE COME JOIN US

Wednesday, February 17th from 12:00-2:00 pm

SNOQUALMIE ROOM

2917 South Snoqualmie St, Seattle, WA 98108

CULTURAL POT LUCK & FREE MUSIC



Thứ Tư ngày 17 tháng 2, từ 12 giờ đến 2 giờ chiều

SNOQUALMIE ROOM

2917 South Snoqualmie St, Seattle, WA 98108

XIN MANG THỨC ĂN ƯA THÍCH CỦA MÌNH ĐẾN ĐỀ CÙNG CHIA SẺ,
CHÚC TẾT VÀ NGHE NHẠC

MỜI MỌI NGƯỜI CÙNG ĐẾN CHUNG VUI TIỆC XUÂN

Liên lạc (tiếng Việt): Phung Nguyen (206) 461 - 4568 Ext. 4115 / 353-5985
Contact (English): Jen Calleja (206) 495 - 1615



Ditch the workout and join the party! Now through March 30, Seattle Center is offering free **zumba** and **gentle yoga** classes on the Armory Dance Floor on the main level.

Zumba classes are Wednesdays from 6-7 p.m. Moves will be set to Latin music, world rhythms, West African, pop and classic rock and will bring a smile to your face and sweat to your brow.

Gentle Yoga, offered Wednesdays from 7:30-8:30 p.m., is geared for all ages and fitness levels. A focus is on increasing range of motion and increasing joint and muscle flexibility. Bring your own yoga mat.

Content guide

Don't see your neighborhood section? Consult the guide below to find the logos that correspond to your community.

-  High Point Herald
-  NewHolly Notes
-  Rainier Vista News
-  Yesler Happenings

COMMUNITY RESOURCES



GET YOUR TAXES DONE FOR FREE

Tax help is available Jan. 11 to April 21, 2016, at a site near you! If your household makes less than \$62,000, head to one of 24 locations in King County for free help filing your taxes—no appointment needed and no fees to pay.

Plus, get additional services, including signing up for health care and public benefits and pulling your free credit report.

2 Easy Ways to File:

1. Visit one of our 24 locations.
-- OR --
2. File for free online at myfreetaxes.com.

What to Bring:

- Social Security card/ITIN letters for everyone on the return (required)
- Photo ID (required)
- All tax statements, such as W-2 form, 1099 form, SSA-1099 form, etc. (required)
- Health insurance forms 1095-A, 1095-B, or 1095-C (if applicable)
- Bank account number and routing number (recommended)
- A copy of last year's tax return (recommended)

Note: If you are filing with your spouse, you both must be present to e-file.

100% gratis para las unidades familiares que ganan menos de \$62,000. No se necesita cita—entre directamente.

Se exige identificación con fotografía y tarjeta del Seguro Social/carta de ITIN. Usted también puede solicitar un ITIN en uno de nuestros sitios fiscales.

Para encontrar la ubicación más cercana en su idioma, llame al 2.1.1 o al 800.621.4636.

现免费提供中文报税服务。

Có dịch vụ khai thuế miễn phí bằng tiếng Việt.

Бесплатные услуги по расчёту налогов предоставляются на русском языке.

በገንዘብ ገጣጅነት በአማርኛ እንሰጣለን።

For More Information:

To find the nearest location in your language:

- Go to uwkc.org/taxhelp.
- Call 2.1.1 or 800.621.4636.

Around the Sound

City opens two parking lots for homeless car dwellers

BY CITY OF SEATTLE

In response to the continued crisis of homelessness on the streets of Seattle, Mayor Ed Murray issued an emergency order to expedite the siting of two safe lots in Ballard and West Seattle for homeless individuals and families living in recreational vehicles and cars.

The Ballard site, the Yankee Diner parking lot at Shilshole Ave. NW and 24th Ave. NW, is owned by Seattle Public Utilities. The Seattle Department of Transportation has been in negotiations with the Washington State Department of Transportation to acquire a parking lot next to the Glass Yard lot at West Marginal Way and Highland Park Way SW for the site in West Seattle.

"These are not long term solutions to end homelessness, but temporary locations that can be managed to provide a safer environment for those living on our streets and have less impact on our neighborhoods," said Murray.

Expected to begin operations in 30 days, the two safe lots can hold up to an estimated 50 vehicles. Each site will have sanitation and garbage service, as well as case management assistance for those experiencing homelessness in order to build pathways to permanent housing.

All residents must abide by a code of conduct policy that will prohibit drugs and violence, and require residents to be good neighbors.



movies at the Library



Teens! Let your voice be heard!

Free Food! Free Prizes!

Join us for a FREE film screening "Through the Fire."

When: 5 p.m. - 8 p.m. Friday, Feb. 26
Where: NewHolly Gathering Hall, 7054 32nd Ave. S.

Nagala soo qayb gala!

Come celebrate Somali culture, pride and heritage. Free food! Win special prizes!

www.spl.org • 206-386-4636

NPR's StoryCorps hosts listening party at NewHolly Feb. 4



BY VOICE STAFF

Last August, Seattle-area residents, including those living in NewHolly and Rainier Vista, shared their personal stories with the NPR radio program, 'StoryCorps.'

On Feb. 4 at 6:30 p.m., KUOW, the local NPR affiliate, will hold a listening party for all those who participated, and for those who are just curious to hear about other people's life experiences.

The show's producers recorded more than 100 pairs of people talking about life and some who discussed what it was like to be homeless in the Puget Sound area.

Through StoryCorps, NPR hopes to highlight voices that are often quieted or underrepresented by mainstream media, thus revealing a more accurate representation of America's true diversity.

The event is free and will feature local residents, best friends and relatives, and Mayor Ed Murray and his partner, Michael Shiosaki will also share their story. NewHolly Gathering Hall is located at 7054 32nd Ave. S. in Seattle.

Hoa Mai

Continued from Page 1

noticing the progress he and his colleagues make on projects.

Hoa Mai Gardens will include a green building feature that experts say is rare in multi-story residential homes. Frank Burns, SHA's construction project manager, says that like any good garden, it will make use of rain water to help it thrive. Precipitation falling on the roof will flow into a cistern system allowing rainwater to supplement the city water used to flush the toilets. This will save water and lower long-term operating costs for the building.

The building will house spaces for social services programming and community building activities, and a property management office.

TRANSLATIONS

TRANSLATED ARTICLES FROM THE VOICE

Se ofrece ayuda gratis para preparar la declaración de impuestos para los residentes de bajos ingresos hasta el 21 de abril/By Leahla Contreras

Ayuda para preparar la declaración de impuestos está disponible hasta el 21 de abril en muchos lugares en el área de Puget Sound. Si el ingreso total de su domicilio no alcanza los \$62,000 por año, el United Way del condado de King le ayudará a preparar sus impuestos- y no hace falta programar una cita. La preparación gratis de impuestos de United Way es una herramienta que la gente puede usar para quedarse con más del dinero que ha ganado, así haciendo posible que cuiden mejor de sus familias o que ahorren para el futuro. Si usted va a declarar con su esposo/a, los dos tienen que estar presentes para declarar por internet.

Para localizar el sitio de impuestos más cercano a usted, visite www.uwkc.org/taxhelp o llame al 2.1.1 o al 800.621.4636. Para declarar en línea,

visite www.myfreetaxes.com.

Hay que tener los siguientes documentos para hacer el tramite:

- La tarjeta del seguro social/el número de identificación personal del contribuyente (ITIN) para todos los que declaren (obligatorio)
- Una tarjeta de identificación con fotografía (obligatorio)
- Toda declaración de impuestos, por ejemplo el formulario de W-2, 1099, SSA-1099, etcétera. (obligatorio)
- Los formularios del seguro medico 1095-A, 1095-B, o 1095-C (de ser aplicable)
- El número de la cuenta del banco y el numero bancario de ruteo (recomendados)
- Una copia de la declaración de impuestos del año pasado (recomendada)

ትሑት ኣታዊ ክለሞም ነበርቲ ክሳብ 21 ሚያዝያ ታክስ ሪተርን ብናጻ ከስርሕዎ ዝግበር ሓገዝ! /By Habte Negash

ትሑት ኣታዊ ክለሞም ነበርቲ ፕሮጀት ሳውንድ ኣብ ዘዳለዎም ዝተፈላለዩ ቦታታት ብምኻድ ክሳብ 21 ሚያዝያ ታክስ ሪተርን ብናጻ ከስርሑ ይኸእሉ እዮም።

ዓመታዊ ኣታዊ ናይ ስድራቤትኩም ካብ \$62,000 ዘይበዝሕ እንተኮይኑ ኣብ ኪንግ ካውንቲ ዝርከብ ዩናይትድ ወይ ታክስ ሪተርን ብናጻ ከትስርሕዎ ክሕግዘኩም እዩ። ቆጻራ ኣየድልን እዩ።

ዩናይትድ ወይ: ኣታዊታዊ ስድራቤታት ግንቡዩ መጻኢ ህይወቶም ኬመሓይኹ ካብ ዘለዎ ዕላማ ተበገሱ እዩ ነዚ ዝገብር ዘሎ።

እቲ ታክስ ሪተርን ሰብኣይን ሰበይትን ሓቢሮም ከስርሕዎ እተደልዩም፣ ክልቲኦም ክቀርቡ ይግባእ፤

ኣብ ከባቢኩም ዝርከብ ቦታ ኣየናይ ምዃኑ ንምፍላጥ ኣብ www.uwkc.org/taxhelp ተመልከቱ፣ ወይ ድማ ኣብ 2.1.1 ከምኡውን ኣብ 800.621.4636 ደውሉ። ወይ ድማ እንላይን ኣብ visit www.myfreetaxes.com ተመልከቱ።

ታክስ ሪተርን ንምስራሕ ዘድሊ መረገጺ እዚ ዝስዕብ እዩ :-

- ኣብቲ ታክስ ሪተርን ናይ ዝጥቀስ ነፍሲ ወከፍ ሰብ ሰኩራቲ ናይ ሶሻል ሰኣኩራቲ ካርድ።
- ስእሊ ዘለዎ ወረቀት መንነት (Photo ID)
- ዓመታዊ ኣታዊ ታት ዝሕብሩ መረገጺታት ንኣብነት W-2 form, 1099 form, SSA-1099 ዝኣመሰልሱ መረገጺ።
- ከምኡውን 1095-A, 1095-B, or 1095-C ዝኣመሰል ናይ ሄልዝ ኢንሹራንስ ፎርምታት- (እንተህልዩኩም)።
- ናይ ባንክ ሕሳብ ቁጽራ።
- ናይ ዝሓለፈ ዓመት ናይ ታክስ ሪተርን መረገጺ ወርቃቅቲ ቅዳሕ።

Бесплатная помощь по оформлению налогов для малоимущих лиц до 21 апреля/ By Irina Vodonos

Помощь по оформлению налогов оказывается до 21 апреля по всему округу Кинг. Если доход вашей семьи не превышает 62 000 долларов в год, благотворительная организация Юнайтед Уэй оф Кинг Каунти (United Way of King County) может помочь вам оформить налоговую декларацию без предварительной записи. Программа Юнайтед Уэй «Бесплатное оформление налогов» существует для того, чтобы помочь людям сохранить заработанные деньги и обеспечить текущие нужды своей семьи, одновременно думая о завтрашнем дне. Если вы оформляете налоги как супружеская пара, оба супруга должны присутствовать при электронном оформлении налогов через данную программу.

Чтобы найти наиболее удобное для вас место, где предоставляются бесплатные услуги по программе, зайдите на сайт www.uwkc.org/taxhelp или позвоните по телефону 2.1.1 или 800.621.4636. Самостоятельно оформите налоги электронным

образом через программу Юнайтед Уэй можно на сайте www.myfreetaxes.com.

С собой потребуются принести следующие документы:

- Карточки социального страхования (social security) или письма с индивидуальным идентификационным номером налогоплательщика (ITIN) для всех членов семьи, включенных в налоговую декларацию (обязательно)
- Удостоверение личности с фотографией (обязательно)
- Всю налоговую документацию, например формы W-2, 1099, SSA-1099 и т.д. (обязательно)
- Документы по медицинской страховке 1095-A, 1095-B или 1095-C (если есть)
- Код вашего банка (routing number) и номер банковского счета (желательно)
- Копию заполненной налоговой декларации за прошлый год (желательно)

ለዝቅተኛ ገቢ ላላቸው ነዋሪዎች እስከ ኣፕሪል 21 ድረስ የነፃ የታክስ እርዳ/ By Assaye Abunie

እስከ ኣፕሪል 21 ድረስ በፕሮጀት ሳውንድ ኣካባቢ በሚገኙ ቦታዎች የነፃ የታክስ እርዳታ ይሰጣል። በቤት ውስጥ እስከ \$62,000 በዓመት ገቢ ያለዎት ከሆነ የኪንግ ካውንቲ ዩናይትድ ወይ የታክስ ፎርማትሁን እንድትሞሉ ይረዳችኋል። ቀጠሮም ኣያስፈልግም። የዩናይትድ ወይ የነፃ የታክስ ስራ እርዳታ የሚፈልጉትን ሰዎች ገንዘባቸውን ሳያባክኑ ቤተሰባቸውን እንዲረዱና ባዛውም ለወደፊቱ ኑሯቸው ገንዘብ እንዲያጠራቅሙ ለማድረግ ጭምር ነው። ከባለቤትዎ ጋር ፎርም የሚሞሉ ከሆነ ሁለታችሁም የኢ- ፊይሉን ለመሙላት መገኘት ኣለባችሁ።

በኣካባቢያችሁ የሚገኘውን ቦታ ለማግኘት www.uwkc.org/taxhelp ይጎብኙ ወይም በስልክ 2.1.1 ወይም 800.621.4636 ይደውሉ. በኢንተርኔት

ለሞሙላት የሚከተለውን ይጎብኙ www.myfreetaxes.com.

በሚመጡበት ጊዜ የሚከተሉትን መያዝ ኣለብዎ:-

- ሶሻል ሰኣኩራቲ ወረቀት / ታክስ የሚሞላው ሰው የመታወቂያ ቁጥር (ለማንኛውም ኣስፈላጊ ነው) የፎቶ መታወቂያ (ኣስፈላጊ ነው)
- ማንኛውም የታክስ መረጃ: ለምሳሌ W-2 form, 1099 form, SSA-1099 form እና የመሳሰሉት (ኣስፈላጊ ነው)
- የቤና ኢንሹራንስ ፎርም 1095-A, 1095-B, or 1095-C (የሚያስፈልግ ሲሆን)
- የባንክ ኣካውንት ቁጥር እና ራውቲንግ ቁጥር (ይመረጣል)
- ያለፈው ዓመት የታክስ የተሰራውን ፎርም (ይመረጣል)

KHAI THUẾ MIỄN PHÍ CHO CƯ DÂN CÓ LỢI TỨC THẤP TỪ NAY ĐẾN 21 THÁNG 4/By Long Luu

Có giúp khai thuế miễn lệ phí từ nay cho đến 21 tháng 4 ở nhiều địa điểm trong khu vực Puget Sound. Nếu gia đình quý vị có mức lương dưới \$62 ngàn đô mỗi năm, thì cơ quan United Way thuộc quận King sẽ giúp quý vị khai thuế- không cần phải làm hẹn trước. Dịch vụ giúp khai thuế miễn phí của United Way là công cụ giúp cho dân giữ lại thêm tiền mà họ kiếm ra và giúp họ chăm sóc gia đình cũng như tiết kiệm cho tương lai. Nếu quý vị khai chung với người phối ngẫu, thì cả hai phải có mặt lúc khai thuế.

Để biết thêm địa điểm khai thuế gần nhà, hãy vào thăm trang mạng www.uwkc.org/taxhelp hoặc gọi cho 2-1-1 hoặc 800-621-4636. Để khai thuế trên mạng, hãy vào trang www.myfreetaxes.com.

Đây là những thứ mà quý vị cần mang theo:

- Thẻ An Sinh Xã Hội/ / Nhận Dạng Thuế Vụ
- Thẻ nhận dạng có hình (ID)
- Tất cả chứng từ khai thuế, như mẫu W-2, 1099, SSA-1099...
- Chứng từ đóng tiền bảo hiểm sức khỏe 1095-A, 1095 B hoặc 1095-C (nếu có)
- Trạng mục ngân hàng (yêu cầu phải có)
- Bản sao giấy khai thuế năm trước (yêu cầu phải có)

Cawinaada cashuurcelinta lacagla'aanta ah ee dadka dakhliga yar oo ku eg 21ka April/By Mahamoud Gaayte

Caawinaad ku saabsan cashuur celinta ayaa ku eg 21ks bisha April, taas oo ka dhacaysa gooba kaladuwana degaanka Puget Sound. Hadii dakhligaagu kayaryahay \$62,000 sanadkii, United Way of King County ayaa diyaar kuula ah khubara kaa caawinaya cashuur celintaada- balan uma bahaanid.

Barnaamijkan United Way ayaa ha mid lagu caawinayo dadka dakhliga yar sidii ey u lexejeclaysan lahaayeen lacagta yar oo ey sameeyaan uguna suurta geli lahayd in ey yeeshaan kayd mustaqbalka. Hadii aad laxeraysaneyso lammaanahaaga waa in aad labadiinuba joogtaan.

Sida aad u heshid goobta kuugu dhow fadlan booqo www.uwkc.org/

taxhelp ama soo wac 800.621.4636 si aad internetka uga buuxsatid booqo www.myfreetaxes.com.

Hoos ka daalaco waxyaabaha aad u baahantahay in aad latimaadid:

- Social Security/warqada looyaqaan ITIN dadka aan lahay SS, qofkasta oo kugu xiriira ama aad biishid
- Aqoonsigaaga (Photo ID)
- Waraaqaha W2, 1099, SSA-1099 iwm
- Caaymiska caafimaad 1095-A, 1095-B ama 1095-C
- Xisaab bangi (ma aha khasab)
- Cashuurcelintii sanadkii lasoo dhaafay (ma aha khasab)

OUR COMMUNITIES

STORIES FROM OUR FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS

A single mother's determination to reclaim her independence: Self-sufficiency and positive outlook stem from hard work and perseverance

BY NANCY GARDNER
The Voice editor

In 2005, Elsa was pregnant, homeless and living in a shelter with two of her four children. A recent divorce had left her without a stable home and with very few resources.

Her first step was to secure a spot in transitional housing with the YWCA. After applying and waiting for public housing, she was accepted into King County Public Housing Authority's Birch Creek apartments in 2010.

While this solved one major obstacle, the road to becoming self-sufficient was still long. Through the help of Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS), Elsa was referred to a women's-only training program called Courage360, operated by the non-profit of the same name. This helped build her confidence and hone her computer skills. At the same time, she was also enrolled in The Grace Training Foundation, a program which helped boost her self-esteem.

Along the way, she's volunteered for CASA, the national organization of Court Appointed Special Advocates, and has worked with parents who've overcome addiction and been reunited with their children. She became involved with CASA because she says it's one of her life's passions, and is a way of giving back to her community.

Trained citizen-volunteers like Elsa advocate for the best interests of abused and neglected children in courtrooms and communities. These advocates provide judges with the information needed to ensure children's needs and rights are being addressed while in foster care.

In mid-January, Elsa completed CASA training and now volunteers with the program at King County Superior Court.

"My focus and passion are to reunite and engage families and to enlighten individuals to regain strength within themselves.

"My path has transformed me to a warrior, not a victim. I hope that by hearing my story, women who are faced with similar struggles will be inspired and motivated to seek a better life," she says.

Elsa has overcome her own past difficulties and has remained determined to make positive changes in her life, which included furthering her education. About five years ago, the former Bremerton resident enrolled at Green River Community College and worked on her homework several days a week by way of computer labs at both Neighborhood House and Kent Youth and Family Services centers.

After much hard work, she graduated from Green River Community College in 2012 with an associate's degree in business management. It was at the Birch Creek graduation ceremony where Elsa first met Marla Brown, the career center coordinator with Neighborhood House.

Shortly after that first meeting, Elsa began working with Marla to find employment. Marla helped Elsa develop a resume and practiced job interviewing skills and techniques. Because there had been such a large time gap in employment, Elsa had a tough time finding work.



PHOTO COURTESY OF ELSA

Elsa, homeless and a divorced mother of four, took charge of her situation and reached out to find many local support agencies. She's now a certified Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA).

Marla became Elsa's advocate, constantly encouraging her to believe in herself.

"When I met Elsa, she struck me as a very determined and hard-working individual," Marla says. "She even rode her bike to jobs when she didn't have a car and held six different jobs last year, hoping that one would turn into a full-time offer. I encouraged her during these times when she was working as a temp to just hang in there, since these positions allowed her to make payments on the car she had recently purchased."

Marla says Elsa was relentless, taking temporary seasonal jobs at a fish cannery and at Costco.

A year ago, Elsa was offered a full-time job with Northwest Protective Services, as a security officer in a high rise. She's worked there ever since.

"My rent has been raised, from \$145 a month to \$610, and that's okay, because I'm now self-sufficient."

She credits her success not only to Neighborhood House, but to the many agencies and people along the way who have supported her.

Marla believes Elsa has become a great role model for other residents living at Birch Creek who have children. She has her own car, and is able to support herself and her children, and has her sights set on buying her own house in the not-to-distant future.

"Neighborhood house provides all the tools one needs to find success," Elsa says. "However, if people don't keep their tools sharpened, they could lose out on some great opportunities. The path is not easy, but the eventual triumph is exhilarating," she adds.

Elsa's top employment, housing and counseling resources

The Grace Training Foundation

Non-profit that assists and trains low-income, unemployed or under-employed men and women to compete and succeed in today's job market. Trainings are held throughout Western Washington.

thegracetrainingfoundation@gmail.com

Courage360

Based in Tacoma, Courage360 helps give women the courage to start a new life through strengthening career and life skills.

Pierce County (main office)
253-474-9933; info@courage360.org

Neighborhood House Birch Creek Career Center

Provides employment case management and family support services to residents of Birch Creek and surrounding King County Housing Authority sites, Section 8 recipients and the Kent community.

253-277-1667

Kent Youth and Family Services

This south Sound agency provides professional counseling, education and support services to children, youth and their families.

253-859-0300; info@kyfs.org

King County Housing Authority Family Self-Sufficiency (FSS) program

Helps residents reach financial independence through job training, getting off welfare, applying to college, starting a business, or buying a home. To be eligible, applicants must have a Section 8 voucher or live in subsidized housing to take part in the FSS program.

206-574-1100

YWCA Domestic Violence Shelter

The YWCA offers safe and confidential temporary housing of up to 45 days to survivors and their children fleeing an immediately dangerous situation due to domestic violence. All women age 18 and older and their children are eligible.

Women undergo an intensive telephone screening by calling 206-461-4882 to determine if this shelter will meet their needs.

National calendar contest open to SHA residents until May 27



BY VOICE STAFF

The National Affordable Housing Management Association (NAHMA) is accepting entries for its annual art/calendar contest, now in its 30th year. The theme for the 2016 contest is, "Words That Heal: Stop Bullying, Spread Kindness."

Kindergarten, elementary, junior and high school students and SHA residents 55 and older can enter the calendar contest through www.nahma.org/awards-contests/.

Creations can be simple drawings or can include other media such as tile, macramé, carving, quilting, needlework, website design or photographs and must be created by the entrant without assistance.

Entries are judged on the artist's ability to create a submission with the "Words That Heal: Stop Bullying, Spread Kindness" contest theme.

Judges will consider the following:

- Interpretation of the "Words That Heal: Stop Bullying, Spread Kindness."
- Originality of the submission.
- Quality—Is the art submission appealing to the eye?
- Overall artistic ability—Does the art submission show some degree of creativity and skill for its age group? Will the submission be able to be reproduced with reasonable quality and clarity?

Winners of the national contest receive educational scholarships in the form of a check awarded by the NAHMA Educational Foundation.

Prizes will be awarded in the amounts of between \$100 and \$2,500.

The national contest's grand prizewinner, whose art will appear on the cover of the calendar, receives an educational scholarship and a trip to Washington, D.C., where he or she will be honored at the NAHMA Fall Meeting Oct. 23-25.

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