

Orcas Senior Center Today: An Old Growth Resource with Deep Roots

Old growth forests: Peaceful yet strong, calm yet constantly renewing. Old growth forests attain great age through constant regeneration and renewal. With their multi-layered canopies and roots interwoven—they are not just forests of trees, they are forests of connections. Trees, plants, and even the soil connect and support one another. Constant regeneration ensures that these forests endure and even benefit from the challenges of time and place.

Why did this article start with a description of old growth forests? Because that is the new logo of Orcas Senior Center (OSC). The characteristics of an old growth forest are the characteristics we hope the new logo portrays: Strength, renewal, support and connection.

The new nonprofit, registered with trade name “Orcas Senior Center” in the State of Washington, took over operations on January 1, 2023. This year has been a busy year for the center. The Nutrition Program (Meals on Wheels and senior lunches) is serving more patrons than ever before, while the range of new activities and the return of well-loved traditional ones is increasing month-by-month. The two Companion Services programs—Hearts and Hands and Buddy Check-In—continue to be as relevant today as when they began; while a new program piloted last year, Home Maintenance and Repair, has proven its value to the community and will continue.

The OSC portfolio of services grows in response to community needs and expectations. Most recently, OSC assumed sponsorship of the Statewide Health Insurance Benefit Advisors (SHIBA) program serving all of San Juan County. With volunteers on Orcas, Lopez and San Juan islands, this essential service helps people navigate the complex world of health insurance.

We have fun, too! We hosted the Cider and Mead Festival in July, and on September 30, we will host Herding Kats Jazz—a popular Seattle-based jazz band—in a family night of music and dance. Other activities run the gamut from boat outings to mini-golf and mainland shopping trips. We host multi-generational art classes; walking, book, and card clubs; ukulele players and quilters; and will soon add jewelry-making to the mix. The best part? Most of our programs and activities are open to anyone, not only to seniors.

Of course, none of this would happen without the help of scores of volunteers who make the center such a vibrant and active place. We thank you for being our friends and supporters—we couldn't do it without you!