

OSC In the Future – Sharing a Vision

Adapting to the changing needs of Orcas Island's older adult population is crucial for the continued success of the Orcas Senior Center (OSC). Already, more than half (54%) of islanders are over the age of 55, while the over 75 age group is expected to grow significantly over the next 15 years.

It is with these changing demographics in mind that OSC—the new nonprofit organization that took over operations of the center on January 1—has embarked on a number of initiatives to position our entire community for a more vibrant future. OSC has joined the National Council on Aging (NCOA) and is taking proactive steps to enhance its services and support for older adults and their families. For example, we launched a Dementia Friendly Community initiative which—in coordination with representatives from the business, banking, emergency response and other sectors—will educate and mobilize our community to better recognize and support those with memory loss or dementia. Next year, we hope to sponsor a “memory café,” a safe and reliable space for social connection for these individuals and their caregivers.

OSC today is honored to stand as the primary pillar of support for older adults and persons with disabilities on Orcas Island, while offering most of our services to all community members, regardless of age. Our aim next year is to continue programs that islanders know and love while expanding into new areas that serve an even wider portion of the Orcas community. Our current motto, “Age Well on Orcas” could become, simply, “Live Well on Orcas.”

But we will not lose sight of our roots: Because no other organization represents and advocates specifically for older adults, OSC will remain an essential component of the island’s social service network. We will continue to help provide meals, transportation, and health and wellness services, and to strengthen our partnerships with other service providers on Orcas. We will continue to reach out to isolated community members through our Companion Services program; and we hope to expand our Home Maintenance and Repair program, which has proven its usefulness for allowing people to stay safely in their homes. Perhaps most important of all, we will continue to provide a space for people to connect with other people with similar interests.

David Bowie once said, "Aging is an extraordinary process where you become the person you always should have been," beautifully capturing the essence of aging as a journey of self-discovery and personal growth. OSC members discover and share the best of themselves every day.

What do you want to see from the Orcas Senior (Community) Center? To experience? To learn? Please let us know. Reach out to Edy Hansen, Classes and Activities Coordinator with your ideas at 206-413-6167 or Edy@orcasseniors.org.