



# INTERFAITH COALITION

*Empowering Whatcom County families on their paths out of homelessness.*

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*Fall is quickly approaching. With it comes winds of change as we transition leadership at Interfaith Coalition.*

*Deanna Wildermuth will be ending her time with us as Executive Director and Devin Connolly will be stepping into the role. As the board chair for the last two years, I have had the privilege of working with Deanna as she led the organization through the tumultuous times of the pandemic and continuing to lead the staff in doing the great work of Interfaith Coalition. Deanna will always say it is work done by many, not just her, that keeps the vital work of Interfaith going. The board and staff are grateful for the time and commitment she gave to Interfaith Coalition and to families. We are excited to have Devin Connolly, who shares about herself below, as our incoming Executive Director. She has a strong passion for our mission and for serving our community.*

*Thank you Deanna and welcome Devin!*

*With gratitude, Raquel Hansen, Interfaith Board Chair*

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Hello, friends of Interfaith Coalition!

I am thrilled to begin my new role as Executive Director. I have been on the Interfaith Coalition Board of Directors for the last three years and I enjoy working with others to find creative solutions to difficult problems. My involvement

on the Board has given me valuable insight into the strengths of Interfaith Coalition and the unique needs we meet, but I am also familiar with the challenges we face as we work to find our way out of the pandemic and into our next chapter.

I come to this role with a background in advocacy; for the last several years, I have supported victims of crime and various forms of abuse as they navigate their way through a host of systems. Many of the people I served were also experiencing homelessness while caring for small children, so I bring a tangible understanding of the entire palette of challenges a family can face when their housing situation is unstable. Though each family

faces different struggles on their journey through homelessness, the most common desires they hold are to ensure their family's safety and to be treated with dignity.

What initially drew me to Interfaith Coalition several years ago was right there in the name; collaboration among people of different faiths and beliefs is a long-held passion of mine. During my first career as a tour director in the Near East and the former Soviet Union, I appreciated finding examples of unlikely partnerships between disparate faith communities – they exist in the most unexpected places! That is what I am most excited about in my role as Executive Director; furthering existing partnerships, faith and non-faith based, and finding creative ways to forge new alliances in Whatcom County to advance the mission of Interfaith Coalition. I have a deep appreciation for the work that has been done to keep IFC a valuable organization in our community for over four decades. I look forward to getting to know you better and finding new ways to collaborate!

Devin Connolly  
Executive Director

## THE HOPE AUCTION GETS A MAKEOVER FOR ITS CELEBRATED COMEBACK

On Sunday, September 18, 5:30 pm, we're once again celebrating our Hope Auction in person!

The last time our auction saw the light of day was March 2020, in the throes of a pandemic shutdown. In three weeks' time we took our in-person auction to a virtual one. With staff nail-biting our way through that then uncharted territory, the online auction was a success, once again meeting Interfaith's fundraising goal with the added perk of grabbing the attention of new donors and supporters of our work in Whatcom.

We're now in our 41st year of changing lives for individuals, families, and children all over Whatcom County. We began as Interfaith Community Health Center in 1981, providing free or inexpensive healthcare to vulnerable people. Those services were overwhelmingly utilized and in 2015 that care was

***With your support so far, over 200 Whatcom County families have acquired job skills, secured employment, received subsidies for childcare and housing, and achieved other needs that help break these families out of the cycle of homelessness.***

transitioned into what is now Unity Care NW. At that time, we shifted our focus to another pressing need in Whatcom County: child and family homelessness.

Since then, with your support, Interfaith Coalition has helped nearly 200 Whatcom County families



with children move from homelessness to housed, learn job skills, secure employment, receive subsidies for childcare and housing, and dozens of other needs that break families out of the cycle of

homelessness. Our eleven housing units in Ferndale and Bellingham provide emergency shelter and transitional housing. While in housing, parents set short-term and long-term goals in health and wellness, employment, and financial and housing stability, working with case managers to help families achieve independence.

To ensure our vital work in the community continues,

Interfaith Coalition staff and board are looking ahead to our biggest fundraiser, the Hope Auction.

We're excited to move the festivities to Twin Sisters Brewing Company in the Sunnyland neighborhood of Bellingham. With a slider and salad bar, made by Twin Sisters chefs, open bar Social Hour with beer, wine, and cocktails, plus the popular live auction that includes items such as an Irish Feast with Whiskey Tasting for 8 and 5 Nights in a gorgeous Whistler Condo, guests will



be treated to a spirited celebration and reconnection that doesn't involve Zoom or reminding people that they're on mute. Leading up to our event will be an online silent auction that the public is invited to view and bid. Let

friends and family who can't make it to the in-person Hope Auction know they can still participate online the week ahead!

Tickets for the Hope Auction are \$90 and available through [interfaith-coalition.org](http://interfaith-coalition.org) or by scanning the QR code to the right:



For community members interested in participating in the online silent auction, information will be forthcoming on our website.

**Thank you to our Hope Auction  
Gold & Silver Sponsors!**



**SPIE.**



## THE POWERFUL PULL OF RELATIONSHIPS WHEN FACING CHANGE

We talked with Trudy Shuravloff, Executive Director of The Whatcom Dream, to gain her insights into living with little financial resources. She first connected with the local nonprofit as a student in hopes of breaking out of the grip of what she calls “survival-based thinking,” or what is commonly called generational poverty. Please note that her personal experience does not necessarily reflect everyone’s personal experience.

When any of us make a big change in our social circle, there are consequences. We move and have to say goodbye to friends and family and make new connections. We accept a job and our former and new coworkers must adjust to a different workload and interpersonal dynamic. In low income communities, though, those consequences can be more severe.

“There are social ramifications when anyone does things differently than their community tends to do,” Trudy said. A major change upsets a system and brings conflict into relationships. “That is quite normal,” she said, “yet can be uncomfortable and requires courage.

“When we’re in a close-knit community and see someone doing something differently, we may interpret that as there being something wrong with ourselves or them,” Trudy explained.

In low income class, relationships tend to be prized, whereas in middle income class achievement tends to be prized. Because low income individuals have fewer financial resources, they rely on each other.

“When I’m financially strapped, I don’t hire a repair guy for a broken hot water tank because I can’t afford it, so I reach out to those around me. In low income systems, we might not have AAA because we have Uncle Ray,” Trudy said tongue-in-cheek.

If “Uncle Ray” starts seeing her with new friends or doing things that seem outside of the established social mores, he may question that. He may be worried for her safety. She gave an example.

“Let’s say I get a flat tire and call Uncle Ray. He might say, ‘Perhaps you should call some of your *new* friends.’ But if I go to my *new* friends in middle class, they might put up their guard because these socioeconomic levels have different relational boundaries. They may ask, ‘Why don’t you have insurance?’” At that point, Trudy feels she’s in between worlds, like she has betrayed her

loved ones but doesn’t fit in with the new group.

To be ostracized from one world yet not fully accepted into another can be unbearable. Sometimes, as people are taking steps to improve their self-sufficiency, they self-sabotage; the love of their peers is *that* important.



“To those of us in low income, putting achievement over relationships can feel cold and even a little mean,” Trudy added.

How can we argue with that? So why leave such a tight network that feels comfortable and safe and where you feel like you belong?

“That is a good question,” Trudy said, “poverty is painful. It wears on you and your spirit.”

Was there a time in your life when you made a decision that friends or family didn’t support? What about when you tried fitting into a group that didn’t fully welcome you? Those feelings of being alone or not belonging are powerful and it’s easy to retreat to the safety of what you know.

Trudy isn’t deterred by those obstacles because she knows first-hand that the cycle of survival-based thinking can be transformed into a more sustainable lifestyle. Then a person has the mental space to plan and set goals, such as savings and asset building, plus a life that allows them to establish more secure ways to deal with crisis as it arises.

With a pause as though she’s reflecting on her own experience, Trudy added, “You can really help somebody if you’re brave enough to be vulnerable.”

***As of this printing, we have welcomed three more families into our housing. They now have the space to plan and achieve goals that can take them out of homelessness.***



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## HOPE AUCTION

TWIN SISTERS BREWING COMPANY  
SEPT. 18, 5:30PM

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Interfaith-Coalition.org

Changing lives for Whatcom  
children & families

# INTERFAITH HOPE AUCTION SEPTEMBER 18 • 5:30PM



Celebrate 40+ years  
of changing lives  
in Whatcom County

*It's been three years since we've gathered together!*

- ◇ SOCIAL HOUR OPEN BAR FROM 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM
- ◇ CRAFT BEER, COCKTAILS, AND WINE
- ◇ DELICIOUS BUFFET DINNER PREPARED BY TWIN SISTERS CHEFS
- ◇ LIVE(LY) IN PERSON AND ONLINE SILENT AUCTION
- ◇ MUSIC BY THE SWEET GOODBYES

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\$90 per  
person

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