



# INTERFAITH CONNECTION

Partners in faith. Changing lives.

“It does not matter how slowly you go as long as you do not stop.” - Confucius

As things came to a standstill at the beginning of 2020, we lost our momentum. Just as Family Promise of Whatcom County was gaining speed, we had to bring it to a halt. All of our programs, outreach, and mentoring with families continued, but at a much slower, slogging pace. We were pedaling uphill, keeping upright but certainly not cruising like we had in previous years.



There have been many times when we felt like we may tip over, questioning if we had the energy and resources to keep moving forward. The past 18 months have demanded hard work and we have done it. Not alone, by any means. We’ve done it because we have the stability of our support. Our community continued to give financially, to share

time and skills, to check in and ask questions. While we were pedaling hard, we knew you were there for us and the families we serve. And now that we again have momentum, the hill of uncertainty is not quite so daunting.

The families we serve are pedaling up hill. Sometimes wobbly and uncertain when they arrive, we offer stability in housing and case management. We offer support with classes and conversations and relationships with people who care. Our goal is to empower families so that they might experience momentum to carry them into their next home, their next school, their next work, their next challenge.

Make your year-end donation to keep this momentum going. We’re certainly still climbing the hill, but with your donation, we can ensure that we and the families we work with keep pedaling. Thank you.

Blessings,

Deanna Wildermuth  
Executive Director

“While we were pedaling hard, we knew you were there for us and the families we serve.”



Make your year-end donation to Interfaith Coalition by mailing a check in the provided remit envelope, visiting [interfaith-coalition.org/donate](http://interfaith-coalition.org/donate), or scanning the QR code to the right.



## WINTER COAT DRIVE COLLABORATES WITH NEW PARTNERS

For this year's Winter Coat Drive in Bellingham, we tried something different ... and it worked! A partnership with Ridwell, the new-to-Bellingham company that makes "it easy to sustainably reuse and recycle your stuff," created the simple option for more than 1,000 Ridwell subscribers to donate in-great-condition winter coats they no longer used. Between those donations, the hundreds of coats brought in by Brandon Nelson Partners Realtors' annual Fill the Truck event, and the donations of numerous congregations and individuals, we received nearly 1,400 winter coats!



We moved the coat distribution to the Bellingham Food Bank in hopes of meeting people where they are, making it easy for them to find just the right coat for themselves and their families at the same place they grocery shop. The Bellingham Food Bank lent us tents and tables, as well as offered the help of some of their regular volunteers. With a nice outdoor space, tents to offer protection from the elements, 25 caring and ready into jump-into-action volunteers, and hundreds of warm winter coats, we were ready.

Volunteers helped guests "shop," often holding up various coats and asking, "Is this what you have in mind?" By the end of the two days of distributing, we had given out almost all of the coats. The remaining coats were given to St. Peter's Mission Church in Deming for their coat distribution. We were thrilled! In the words of the sweet little boy when he put on a puffy, fire engine red down jacket that fit him perfectly: "Squeeeeeeee!"

## CAST PERSEVERES DESPITE FIRE

CAST (Coffee and Sandwiches Together) has been serving food to neighbors experiencing homelessness in Bellingham for more than 20 years. In September, a new challenge proved the dedication of the program's volunteers.



In the early hours of September 10<sup>th</sup>, 2021, fire severely damaged the Ukrainian Evangelical Church of Bellingham, the congregation that provided CAST with a prep kitchen and storage for supplies. The Ukrainian community continues to be in our thoughts as they regroup from this devastating loss.

CAST volunteers, determined to continue meeting the needs of neighbors, immediately pooled resources to replace prepackaged food and drinks that were lost in the fire. Thanks to temporary workspaces and hard-working volunteers, CAST safely remained in full operation.

The search for a new storage and prep site began, with Mary Ann O'Hara, a CAST advocate and founder, at the helm. After meeting with numerous congregations, Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Fairhaven has opened their doors to house CAST. The church has clean, spacious facilities and, most importantly, a leadership that believes in the mission of CAST to provide a simple meal to anyone in need in our community.

We at Interfaith commend the volunteers of CAST for their ingenuity, flexibility, and commitment to our neighbors in need. Our community is better with you.

*From September 2020 - September 2021, CAST volunteers served 10,652 meals to 5,216 neighbors in need.*

The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) generally defines affordable housing as housing in which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities.

For example, let's say that Jessica, a single mom of a 2-year-old, works a full-time job in Whatcom County making minimum wage (\$13.69). Jessica would need to find housing that is \$712 or less per month, including utilities, in order to be living in what is considered affordable housing for Whatcom County. Now let's see how those numbers compare with Fair Market Rent numbers for Bellingham from HUD's Office of Policy Development and Research (Keep in mind that the rent amounts in the below chart do not include the cost of utilities):

Final FY 2021 & Final FY 2020 FMRs By Unit Bedrooms					
Year	Efficiency	One-Bedroom	Two-Bedroom	Three-Bedroom	Four-Bedroom
FY 2021 FMR	\$907	\$972	\$1,245	\$1,782	\$2,156
FY 2020 FMR	\$846	\$905	\$1,175	\$1,695	\$2,063

Working full-time, making \$13.69 per hour, Jessica would not be able to afford an efficiency apartment at Fair Market Rent in Bellingham. She wouldn't have even been able to afford it in 2020 and she definitely won't be able to afford it in 2022, when Fair Market Rent for an efficiency apartment is projected to increase to \$926 per month.

According to the City of Bellingham's site, those in the lowest income bracket, earning below 50% of the median income, cannot afford housing in today's private housing market. For moderate and middle income earners, there are not affordable options to become homeowners. High income earners are currently served by the housing market. Everyone who lives in Whatcom County deserves to have a stake in the housing market, not just those of us with privilege. That means those of us who make \$20,000 a year and those of us who make \$200,000 a year.

But back to how affordable housing impacts you.

By having affordable housing, people can use some of their financial resources to support the local economy. They can grab pizza from Fiamma or buy a garden hose from Hardware Sales. Our local businesses rely on community support. As Gina Leckron, a director for Habitat for Humanity says, "When we get families into homes, they can begin paying property taxes. And if they have a home that they can afford, they have more expendable funds to spend on food and other consumer goods. They help local businesses because they can afford to eat in restaurants and shop in stores."

Having affordable housing for every single member of our community fosters economic diversity, which

promotes social inclusion. It diminishes segregation in and between our neighborhoods and increases engagement, acceptance, and tolerance between each other. When we are rooted in our community, we're more likely to invest in it and care for it. That goes for renters and homeowners alike. The economic impact of housing affordability can also start a ripple effect for an entire community. When families spend less on housing, they have more to spend on goods and services. These transactions fuel community-wide economic growth by bolstering local businesses and the local workforce. They also contribute to the local tax base that gets invested back into the community through government programs and infrastructure improvements — resources that benefit you.

(FMR = Fair Market Rent)



*Since October 2020, Interfaith and Family Promise has safely housed 21 Whatcom County families who had previously been experiencing homelessness, including 48 kids and 35 adults.*





**INTERFAITH COALITION  
OF WHATCOM COUNTY**

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**KEEP THE MOMENTUM**

Families we serve are pedaling uphill. We work to empower them so that they gain momentum to carry them into their next home, their next school, their next work, their next challenge.

Make your year-end donation to keep their momentum going.

**INTERFAITH-COALITION.ORG/DONATE**

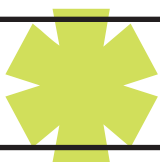
**WHAT IS AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOW DOES IT BENEFIT YOU?**



The Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) generally defines affordable housing as housing in which the occupant is paying no more than 30 percent of gross income for housing costs, including utilities.

When we, our friends, and our families are safely and stably housed in cozy places of our own, why think about affordable housing in Whatcom County? An easy conclusion is that it simply doesn't impact those of us who aren't in the housing or rental market, but that is far from the truth. Affordable housing impacts our entire community, which in turn impacts each of us on a personal level.

**(Read more inside on how affordable housing for everyone benefits you)**



View our 2021 Annual Report online at [interfaith-coalition.org/annual-report-2021](https://interfaith-coalition.org/annual-report-2021)



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