

Community Impact Report 2023



Alexis Burroughs holds a big maple leaf while leading a forest bathing session at Lord Hill Regional Park near Snohomish.

Ryan Berry / The Herald

At The Daily Herald, we believe independent, fact-based reporting and holding those in power accountable are essential to healthy communities and a healthy democracy.

Our trained journalists perform due diligence in assessing the credibility of our sources and pursue an unwavering commitment to the truth. We provide in-depth news and information with a focus on Snohomish County to help you stay informed, understand the issues and connect with your community.

This annual impact report highlights how The Daily Herald, as your local newspaper, served the public good with trusted journalism throughout 2023.

We are grateful to be the community watchdog and storyteller for Snohomish County — a role we have been fulfilling for more than 120 years. With your support, we'll continue to have an impact for years to come.

Phillip O'Connor, Executive Editor



In your words

The truth is this: The impact of The Daily Herald's local journalism on our community is immeasurable. Often, we never hear how the stories you read helped you learn

something new, prompted you to take action or encouraged you to reach out. But sometimes, you tell us about the difference we make.



Snohomish County Detective Kendra Conley hugs Everett Police Lieutenant Tim Collings after Richard Rotter was found guilty of aggravated first-degree murder in the killing of Everett Police Officer Dan Rocha. Olivia Vanni / The Herald

“I very much value The Daily Herald as a watchdog over our city and county government. Without it, we are in trouble.”

— *Michael Mallahan*

The Daily Herald tells our community stories.



Hurdlers run exercises during a track and field practice after school at Lake Stevens High School.

Annie Barker / The Herald

In April 2023, Herald sports editor Zac Hereth wrote about the staggering turnout for the Lake Stevens track and field team and how that creates many challenges the Vikings' coaches are happy to take on in an article headlined "Viking army: Lake Stevens track and field team boasts 344 members."

"I've been meaning to compliment you and thank you for the great story you wrote about our program. We've had a lot of articles written about LS track over the years, but I've never heard from so many people about an article before. I think it's the best one ever — truthfully. Well done, and again, thank you."

— Jeff Page, Lake Stevens track coach

The Daily Herald promotes civic participation.



Alvaro Guillen, executive director of Connect Casino Road, at the Snohomish County Campus in Everett.

Olivia Vanni / The Herald

Despite a growing need, county doesn't provide ballots in Spanish

Snohomish County doesn't meet a threshold mandating Spanish language ballots. Some think they should be standard anyway.

By Jenelle Baumbach
Times Herald St. 2023 | News

EVERETT — Nearly 4,300 Hispanic people in Snohomish County have English limited proficiency, according to state data.

But in the county, ballots and voters' pamphlets are provided only in one language.

For Alvaro Guillen, it's an equity issue.

Guillen, executive director of Connect Casino Road, interacts every day with non-English speakers who express frustration at the language barrier in all aspects of life, including voting.

Under federal law, Snohomish County isn't required to distribute ballots in any alternate language. The federal Voting Rights Act says a county must provide election materials in another language upon meeting two requirements. There must be more than 10,000 voting-age speakers of that language who have limited English proficiency, or they must make up over 5% of the population. Within the group of limited English proficiency speakers, over 1.2% must also be considered illiterate in English.

In Snohomish County, Hispanic people with limited English proficiency make up 0.7% of the voting-age population, falling short of the federal baseline. Of those, 2.6% are considered illiterate.

County Auditor Garth Fell estimated a voters' pamphlet in an alternate language costs between \$10,000 to \$15,000 per election, making cost a setback in the process. Overall, elections typically cost about \$1 million, depending on the turnout.

In October 2023, Herald reporter Jenelle Baumbach wrote about the growing need for Spanish language ballots in Snohomish County and the fact that the county did not meet the threshold mandating Spanish-language ballots. She also included the views of some who felt they should be standard anyway.

Because of that story's impact, an amendment was made a few weeks later during the Snohomish County Council's budget deliberations to allocate \$30,000 to create Spanish-language voters' pamphlets. And Baumbach wrote a new story about the change: "Snohomish County funds Spanish voters' pamphlets, but not ballots — yet."

Snohomish County funds Spanish voters' pamphlets, but not ballots — yet

The county could become the second in the state to provide Spanish-language ballots without being required to.

By Jenelle Baumbach
Times Herald St. 2023 | News

EVERETT — In time for the 2024 presidential election, Spanish language voters' pamphlets will likely be produced for voters in Snohomish County.

In the \$1.66 billion county budget passed last week, the County Council allocated \$30,000 to the auditor's office to create Spanish voters' pamphlets for the primary and general elections.

Council member Nate Nehring introduced the amendment funding the new initiative.

The county isn't required by law to provide the ballots, but will do so anyway. Nehring said he was made aware of the issue by an article in The Daily Herald.

"Even if we're not required to do it, it still seems like a good move to make," Nehring said in an interview earlier this month.

County Auditor Garth Fell appreciated Nehring's intent, but said more money will likely be needed to cover the cost of Spanish ballots, translation, outreach and everything else that goes into making election materials.

"The \$30,000 — that's the actual cost for sending it to a translation service, but it doesn't really account for a lot of the additional costs to create a program that is effective," Fell said.

The money is enough for translating voters' pamphlets, but not ballots.

The Daily Herald helps readers make informed decisions.



Seated on the porch of his Everett home, John Stejer holds a photo of his mother, Betty Stejer.

Ryan Berry / The Herald

Everett son's struggle to get mom into assisted living: \$22K, 1,500 miles

John Stejer's mother, Betty, is eligible for Medicaid. But he discovered no place in the state would take her. "I was actually in disbelief."

By Joy Borkholder
Herald, May 10, 2023 | 11 min | [View Article](#) | [Print Article](#)

EVERETT — John Stejer wishes his mom, Betty, still lived close enough to visit at least weekly. Instead, when her memory and judgment diminished rapidly, the only place he could find an affordable assisted living bed was in Tucson, Arizona.

"We all thought this is where she would spend her last days with family," Stejer said. "To discover that there was no place in the state — I mean, in place — that was really discouraging. And I was actually in disbelief."

Stejer has lived in the Everett area for nearly 40 years, now in a small, two-bedroom home with one bathroom and stairs. He is currently raising his grandson there. In 2021, his then 84-year-old mother was living independently in an apartment in Marysville, with neighbors who looked out for each other.

But she had wandering episodes close together in October. In the first one, she just ran out of gas — which was unusual. The second time, she spent the night disoriented and outside in very cold weather, after she had driven to the end of a remote logging road in Darrington. A fire found her the next afternoon and alerted police. Stejer had filed a missing person's report in the morning.

After a short hospital stay to recover, her doctor strongly recommended assisted living and memory care because she was no longer safe alone. So Stejer, who was retired, started on his search course of options for her. His only other sibling, a brother, lives in Australia.



John Stejer holds a photo of his mother, Betty Stejer, in an interview May 10, 2023, at the home in Everett, Washington. (Ryan Berry / The Herald)

When reporter Joy Borkholder wrote in May 2023 about an Everett son's struggle to get his mother into assisted living, a Daily Herald reader described how that story would inform and inspire others to make decisions.

"You've described the nightmarish, complicated, and confusing journey of Mr. Stejer very well. I believe many readers will be shocked by his story, and perhaps motivated to start learning about how they will pay for their care in their final years. Mr. Stejer's experience and your article will no doubt help many people he will never meet."

— Christine B.

The Daily Herald shines a light on neighbors doing good.

In December 2023, Daily Herald business reporter Janice Podsada wrote about Gifford Horses, a Snohomish rescue that retrains and rehomes thoroughbreds from around the country.

Kaisa Gifford “puts her heart and soul into these animals,” and readers reacted to what she does — and the role the Daily Herald plays in creating awareness.

RIGHT: Kaisa Gifford walks slowly with Manny at the Gifford Horses barn in Snohomish. Manny is able to walk longer periods of time and is regaining some of his lost body weight.

BELOW: Kaisa Gifford holds up Manny’s head for a drink of water. Manny spends a lot of time laying down at the horse rescue and doesn’t have enough energy to consistently drink water.

Photos by Annie Barker / The Herald



“Your story about Kaisa Gifford was moving. You brought forth the story of a woman helping the most vulnerable horses. One reading the story wonders, “how can I help?” YOU helped by writing. Thank you for writing an excellent story. I hope you continue to use your talents to help causes, bring awareness, and shine a light on people who are doing good work. Well done.”

— Hazel Moore-Travison

The Daily Herald helps us understand the issues.



Kristy Carrington, CEO of Providence Swedish of North Puget Sound, speaks during a Healthcare Summit in September 2023 at Everett Community College.

Ryan Berry / The Herald

Telling the stories about our community's challenges helps us understand the issues and step toward change. When area experts about healthcare came together in September 2023 to talk about provider shortages, rising costs and health care barriers, Sydney Jackson, Herald health reporter, was there to cover the discussion.

"...you really nailed the essence of the complex discussions that took place. Your piece has provided a meaningful platform for our panelists to share their experiences and insights.

These conversations are tough but necessary - and having them out in the open is a big step towards making positive changes. I'm so grateful for your help in making that happen."

— Wendy Poischbeg, *Economic Alliance of Snohomish County*

Providence, Optum and Premera discuss challenges at Everett summit

Five panelists spoke on labor shortages, high costs and health care barriers Wednesday at Everett Community College.

By Sydney Jackson

Thursday, September 28, 2023 1:30am

LOCAL NEWS



EVERETT — E-visits, telehealth and simulated nurse training: the future of health care in Snohomish County is digital, local experts said Wednesday.

Dozens of local leaders met for a summit at Everett Community College to address the health care industry's worsening challenges and discuss potential solutions. Optum Washington's market president, Inelda Dacones, served on a panel of five experts and stakeholders who spoke on issues such as labor shortages, rising costs and access barriers in the county.

"We will never have enough nurses, we will never have enough doctors, we will never have enough mental health therapists," Dacones said. "Let's just get real."

Dacones held up her cell phone to the audience.

"This is the new doctor's bag," she said.



The Daily Herald serves as a community watchdog.

Serving as the community watchdog is a core responsibility of the press. Investigative reporters and editors can spend months on a single story to surface the information that citizens in a democracy deserve to know. Such reporting holds those in power accountable and can foster reform that benefits a community. Often, an investigation begins by simply asking a question.

Cole Riccardo works on setting up new underground power lines in August in Arlington.

Olivia Vanni / The Herald



“A \$695K salary? Overtime pay at the Snohomish County PUD has soared”: This story written by Herald editor and reporter Jake Goldstein-Street in September 2023 examined why overtime had nearly tripled in six years at the utility, as it dealt with staff attrition and growing electricity demand.

It was the sixth most-read story of 2023 on HeraldNet.com.

“Snohomish County prosecutors declined 3,000 felony cases in 2022. Why?” This is another example of an investigation that began with a question. Written in May 2023, the story examined the pandemic backlog and inexperienced cops that led to the current trend, even as police raised the alarm about rising crime.



County Prosecutor Jason Cummings is interviewed by The Daily Herald. Annie Barker / The Herald

 **How does an investigative story begin at The Daily Herald?** Discover what reporters and editors consider when making decisions about what to cover and how they approach their work. Watch the video: heraldnet.com/investigating-the-investigators.

The Daily Herald records our history.



Celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay charges into the Prohibition Grille on Dec. 5, 2012, while shooting an episode of “Kitchen Nightmares” to make over a downtown Everett restaurant (which later went out of business). A series of stories about film and TV productions in Snohomish County was one of the most-read articles on HeraldNet.com in 2023. Herald photo

Throughout 2023, the Herald ran an occasional series of articles exploring TV shows and movies filmed in Snohomish County, including projects shot in Everett, Monroe and Index. In September, Herald writer Eric Schucht wrote about even more projects, from reality television to low-budget indie films, that readers pointed out had been missed from previous entries. The final story, “Even more films and TV shows filmed in Snohomish

County,” included Richard Pryor’s 1981 comedy “Bustin’ Loose” and celebrity chef Gordon Ramsay’s visit to Everett in 2013 to film an episode of “Kitchen Nightmares.”

The biggest feedback we received from readers about the last article in the Hollywood in Snohomish County series was that you loved it! Your clicks to view it online at Heraldnet.com made it the third most-read Herald story of 2023.

The Daily Herald connects us with others.



Ashley Morrison posted this photo to her Instagram account on Dec. 30, 2022. In the post's caption, Ashley discussed her struggles with mental health and said 2022 was "easily the most difficult year of my life" and she "wouldn't have survived without my mom, and close family and friends support." (Photo provided by Cindi Morrison)

Many mourn Everett's 'Youngest Old Cat Lady,' Ashley Morrison

On social media, she gained a huge following for her cat rescue. She was also transparent about her mental health struggles.

By **Andrea Brown**

Thursday, April 13, 2023 2:20pm | LOCAL NEWS | EVERETT



EVERETT — She was known worldwide as the "Youngest Old Cat Lady."

Her life centered around cat rescue, fostering, adoption and "spreading happiness through mini lions." Her Instagram had playful kittens and her special brand of humor.

Along with cute kitties, there was another side Ashley Morrison shared with her nearly 250,000 Instagram followers on @youngestoldcatlady: Her struggle with mental illness.



Ashley Morrison pictured with one of her rescue kittens. Although not all were in her home, at one time Ashley had 33 cats under her care. (Photo provided by Cindi Morrison)

Ashley died by suicide on April 6. She was 31.

Ashley grew up in Everett. She moved to Los Angeles in her early 20s to pursue a career in acting. Her favorite claim to fame was appearing in a Taylor Swift video.

She returned home after three years to finish her degree at the University of Washington Bothell. She traveled extensively, to five continents, 31 countries and 40 states, part of which was a semester at sea in college.

After her father Jay Morrison died by suicide in 2015, she and her mom, Cindi, immediately fostered three cuddly kittens who needed to be bottle-fed around the clock.

One of the things a local newspaper like the Herald does best is connect people with others so they know they are not alone.

The Herald's second-most read story in 2023, written by reporter Andrea Brown, helped to foster a community of support. It was about Ashley Morrison, who was known worldwide as the "Youngest Old Cat Lady" for her life centered around cat rescue, fostering and adoption. Ashley, who grew up in Everett, openly shared her struggles with mental health. She died by suicide on April 6, 2023, at age 31.

"Your article in today's Herald about Ashley Morrison & her mom's quest to keep her daughter's legacy alive was truly beautiful. I belong to a Facebook group that was created after Ashley's death for her followers to express their grief at her loss & to show how her work has inspired them (In Memory of Our Youngest Old Cat Lady - Grief & Compassion Support). You would be amazed at the outpouring of love contained on the page from people all over the world. Today I posted a comment there with a link to your article & everyone has commented that it was a wonderful tribute to her memory. You have touched the still-grieving hearts of Ashley's followers far & wide."

— Barb I.

The Daily Herald gives us information
we can use in our daily lives.



Items are sorted
for recycling
inside the Waste
Management
Cascade Recycling
Center in
Woodinville.

Annie Barker
/ The Herald

In November 2023, environmental reporter Ta'Leah Van Sistine introduced Trash Talk, a new column on waste that was inspired by readers' questions. The first article in the series focused on recycling in Snohomish County with the

intent to help clear up confusion about waste guidelines. After Van Sistine addressed the question, "What can you recycle, really?" her inbox filled with positive comments from readers.

"Thank you for your article about recycling, which, indeed, is an issue many of us wonder about." — Julie L.

"Thank you for choosing this topic. It's not glamorous but people need to know." — Gabriella G.

"Thank you for writing this column about a most important subject for our world." — Mike C.

"Thank you so much for Trash Talk. I enjoyed today's article and look forward to more." — Pam H.

"I'm looking forward to your series on recycling! Walking through my neighborhood on garbage day makes it apparent that people are confused about what and how they can recycle." — Linda W.

The Daily Herald digs into the facts.



Marysville School District Superintendent Zac Robbins speaks during an event kicking off a pro-levy campaign in January.

Ryan Berry / The Herald

In February 2023, the Marysville School District was running the “most critical levy” in its history, according to the school’s chief. Levy stories tend to be straight forward, because they are typically renewals of longstanding tax measures. However, after a double levy failure the year before led to significant budget cuts, Herald reporter Mallory Gruben dug into the facts about what would happen if the levy failed again. Because school funding can be extremely confusing, we explained as clearly as possible why schools ask for levies, what they fund and how they work.

“Thank you for outstanding reporting that is thorough, factual and local issue centered ... You did your (extensive!) homework, and I learned a lot from you. Love that!! Plus the quotes were perfectly placed from multiple, credible sources. Keep up the good work, and please keep a watch on Marysville.”

— A community member on the Best School Marysville committee and frequent board meeting attendee

The Daily Herald can make us smile.



Ryan Berry / The Herald

Andrea Brown's "What's Up with That?" column attracted attention — and generated a lot of smiles — when the focus was on the flirtation between two signs on Rucker Avenue in Everett. Sometimes, focusing on the lighter side of life is just what our community needs.



Watch this video to find out what happened after this story was told: herald-net.com/something-s-in-the-air.

“Andrea is the breath of fresh air we all need. I always look forward to reading her reports. Thanks, Andrea! And Thank You, Herald!”

— Ron F.

“In this world that seems to have so much dismal news, it was a delight to read your upbeat article and see images of those signs, which I drive past nearly every day. Thank you!” — Larry O.

The Daily Herald helps our community prepare for tomorrow.



ABOVE: Jon Bauer, Herald editorial page editor, moderates a panel discussion during The Daily Herald's public forum on affordable housing at the Lynnwood Library on Sept. 14.
Ryan Berry / The Herald



RIGHT: The audience shares a laugh during The Daily Herald forum on mental health care on May 31 in Snohomish.
Olivia Vanni / The Herald

The Herald hosted two forums in 2023 that brought our community together to discuss issues impacting Snohomish County now that could also affect our future.

The first Herald Forum, held in May at the Snohomish Library, focused on access to mental health care, including workforce shortages, insurance coverage and crisis response.

The second forum in September brought a panel of experts to the Lynnwood Library for a discussion

on affordable housing challenges.

Each time, audience members had an opportunity to ask their questions.

Here's what guests attending the Herald Forums said:

"I am in the industry and learned tonight."

"I thought the program was excellent. It also validated the experience I've had in 'trying' to help a friend access behavioral health services."

"Keep up the conversation once a year."



Daily Herald reporters Ta'Leah Van Sistine (left) and Sydney Jackson.

The Daily Herald wants to ensure the future of Snohomish County includes trusted local news and trained individuals ready to become the next generation of news reporters. That's why we work with student interns each year and support students interested in learning more about journalism with the Herald Scholarship Fund. It's why we invited journalism students at colleges throughout Snohomish County to attend our special Behind the News Stories event in October 2023 to get a look behind the scenes at how news stories come to be.



"I began to realize that I could represent a cause greater than myself and make a difference in the world."

— Ann Duan, former high school intern and 2023 recipient of the Herald Scholarship Fund.

It's also why two Herald reporters — Ta'Leah Van Sistine and Sydney Jackson — spent time in November 2023 at Everett Community College talking about career opportunities and reporting challenges and skills with about two dozen journalism students and staff members from the student newspapers at both EvCC and Shoreline Community College. Jackson said about the visit, "We don't just need reporters who are good at their job, we need creative minds to innovate and help ethical and true journalism survive."



Dozens of colorful canoes glide across Tulalip Bay during the Canoe Families journey to Muckleshoot in July.
Olivia Vanni / The Herald

When you support local journalism, you support our community

Newspapers across the country are asking their communities to support the local journalism that supports the public good. The Seattle Times has led the way in this approach and now has a significant portion of its newsroom paid for by grants, sponsorships and individual donors.

Why do newspapers need support beyond what readers might already pay for a subscription? The financial model that used to put reporters on the streets no longer works. Newspapers once relied on advertising revenue to

fund the newsroom, but now that big technology companies monopolize the advertising market, it's tough for local news media to keep covering all the information that communities depend on.

At the Herald, we launched our first community-supported journalism fund in 2020 and we now have four. Each fund was developed in partnership with a nonprofit fiscal sponsor so you can make a tax-deductible donation that supports reporting we would not otherwise be

able to do. You can designate your financial gift for health, education, investigative or environmental and climate change reporting — or all of them!

To learn more about The Daily Herald's community-funded journalism initiatives and how you can add your support, go to: heraldnet.com/local-news-impact.

Questions? Contact SupportLocalJournalism@heraldnet.com.



The Daily Herald maintains editorial control over content produced with fund resources

The Investigative Journalism and Environmental and Climate Change Reporting funds are a partnership between The Daily Herald and Journalism Funding Partners, tax ID #84-2968843, a 501(C)(3) nonprofit organization.

The Education Project and Health Reporting Initiative are administered by the Local Media Foundation, tax ID #36-4427750, a Section 501(c)(3) charitable trust affiliated with Local Media Association. The Health Reporting Initiative is funded in part by a sponsorship of Premera Blue Cross.



Friends, family and neighbors help Ross Haddow (second from right) pull a huge pumpkin from his garden in Edmonds to his truck bed.

Ryan Berry / The Herald

Together, we make an impact

“I give to the Herald because I value a free press, real journalism and local news. In today’s world, local newspapers are struggling to survive. Real journalism incorporates standards and procedures to find and report facts accurately and independently with ethical standards. The Herald does an excellent job with local news, and the environmental reporting is outstanding.” — Paul Roberts

“As a former journalist, I applaud you for carrying the torch of great journalism in the days of nonsense. Bravo!” — Mark C.

“The Everett Herald is one of the last credible news sources in Snohomish County. My small donation is recognition of the important role you, and your fellow staff members play, in ensuring accountability and transparency.” — Kevin Kosche

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