



Because of *Friends* Like You

Called to Serve

Honoring All Who Served



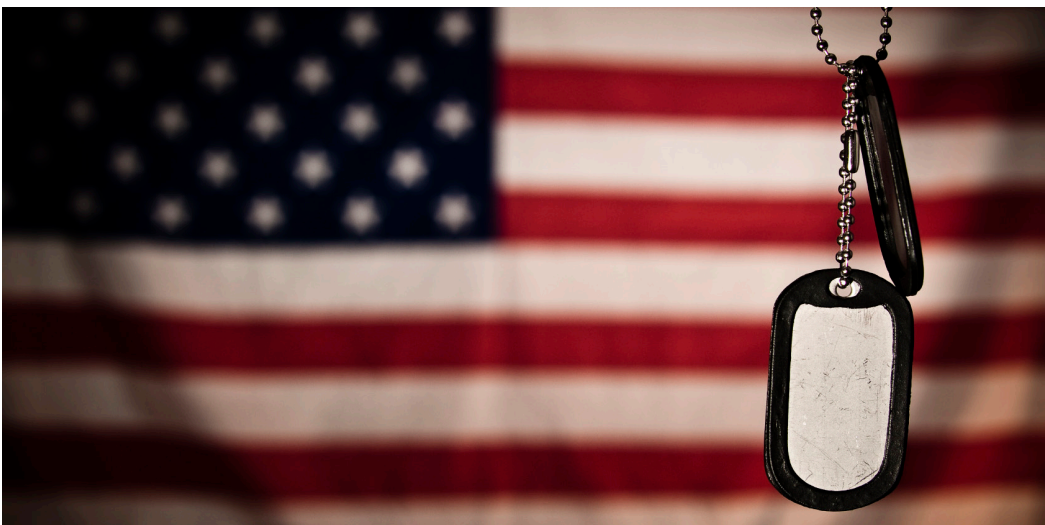
The American efforts during World War II saw the greatest mobilization of the United States Army, Navy, Marines and Air Force in the nation's history. In 1954, after lobbying efforts by Veterans' service organizations, the 83rd U.S. Congress amended the 1938 Act that had made Armistice Day a holiday, striking the word Armistice in favor of Veterans. President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the legislation on June 1, 1954. From then on, November 11 became a day to honor American Veterans of all wars.

Throughout the course of American history, courageous men and women have taken up arms to secure, defend, and maintain the core principles upon which our Nation's freedoms depend. They allow us to live in the home of the free because of their bravery and sacrifice. They demonstrate courage in the midst of uncertainty and risk. They come through difficult times with resilience. They display valor in the defense of our liberty. In short, they embody the ideals upon which America was founded. While we may not know all of them, we certainly owe all of them.

As grateful recipients of these freedoms, we are challenged to convey the thanks worthy of the gifts our service members have bestowed upon us. What possible words could express a level of gratitude commensurate with the sacrifice rendered? While a simple "thank you for your service" seems like only a modest beginning, the best way to show our gratitude is to set the world ablaze with the same compassion, integrity, commitment, and valor demonstrated by our nation's Veterans. For them, perfect valor is to behave without witnesses as one would act were all the world watching. The best way to show our lasting gratitude is to walk their walk, for in the words of JFK, "Valor is stability, not of legs and arms, but of courage and the soul".

We honor all our nation's Veterans for their dedicated and loyal service with lasting gratitude!

**Freedom smiles,
Her fate secure
Beneath its steadfast stars**



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What's In a Name

Friends Refreshes Name to Reflect Regional Scope

'Friends' has recently changed their name to Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound. But as is often said, 'A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.' This world famous phrase has become known to mean that the name of things does not matter, only who and what they are.

So why the name change? The board voted to approve this change to better reflect "Friends" regional reach. With your help, Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound now helps to raise funds and awareness in support of the

operational and often unique needs of four Fisher Houses in Washington State - with the same love of family and commitment as before!

The Friends family now includes supporting Military and Veteran families at VA Puget Sound Health Care System Fisher House, VA Portland Health Care System Fisher House and Joint Base Lewis McChord Fisher Houses I and II.

So what's in a name? For **Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound**, Everything only sweeter!



Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound

Our mission is to ease the burden on our Veterans and their families during difficult times. As a 501(c) (3) non-profit organization registered in Washington State, the Friends work to raise funds and awareness in support of the Fisher Houses in the Puget Sound region. We are grateful for your partnership with us!

Officers

Roxane Rusch, President
John Park, Treasurer
Holly Krejci, Secretary

Directors

Gail Eck, Director
Jan Torell, Director
Joel Wirasnik, Director
Rocco Bagala, Director

Garden Advisor

Phyllis Grant

Newsletter Design

Jonathan Hooley, Graphic Designer

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Photos Top to Bottom: VA Portland Health Care System Fisher House, VA Puget Sound Health Care System Fisher House, Joint Base Lewis McChord Fisher Houses I and II.

Mission Success

Vancouver WA Campus Fisher House Joins Family of Friends

The Fisher House enables family members to be close to their loved one during hospitalization by providing comfortable lodging in a beautiful and relaxing setting. There is no charge for families staying at the Fisher House.

Consistent with this mission, the VA Portland Health Care System opened a beautiful 16-room facility, located on its Vancouver Washington Campus, on March 28th, 2016. This house, like others in the Friends Family, provides a “home away from home” for families of Veterans and military service members who are hospitalized at the Portland Campus acute care hospital or who are residents of the Vancouver campus Community Living Center or Residential Rehabilitation and Treatment Program. It may also serve family and caregivers of Veterans who are receiving extended outpatient specialty care, such as oncology care, at our various specialty clinics.

Since welcoming its first guest, the program has accommodated over 2,100 families and 12,000 nights of lodging. The average length of stay is 5 days.

But without the benefit of a local non-profit group for support, Barbara Decoito-Weaver, House Manager, tells us that budgeting for the comforts of home



Barbara Decoito-Weaver, House Manager

was an ongoing challenge. This year, the Friends stepped in to remedy the situation. The Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound supports the Portland VA Fisher House by donating groceries, guest meals, emergency transportation, and house needs as they occur. She tells us that “families are most grateful and appreciative for the support Friends provides during their stay”. WE say **“Welcome to the Family of Friends.”**

Saluting Our Veterans

Friends Partners with Gordon Biersch



Please join us at Gordon Biersch Brewery Restaurant (Pacific Place downtown Seattle) on November 10th from 5-9pm to “Kickoff” a weeklong fundraiser to honor our Veterans and support Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound.

15% of the proceeds from the sale of their Vets Day IPA will benefit Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound, serving **FOUR Fisher Houses in Washington State.**

Enjoy a Veterans Day menu and the Vets Day IPA!

Building Resilience

Rested, Refreshed and Thankful at Heavens Doorstep

We often hear, in this modern and chaotic world, about the biology of stress and the devastating effect it exacts on us. Toxic stress is now understood to be one of the leading causes of everything from heart disease and cancer to substance abuse and depression. These effects can be even more devastating during acute periods like the illness and hospitalization of a loved one.

On a hopeful note, we have an ever emerging body of knowledge that reveals better ways of dealing with these seemingly intractable problems. Cutting-edge brain science can be applied to disrupt cycles of violence, addiction and disease by creating the capacity to build resilience. One strategy the science backs toward this end is the need for a safe gathering place, a sanctuary, created with great compassion to inspire and welcome our imaginations to engage in open dialogue, create connected community, and identify resources that support holistic, peaceful and sustainable living.

At Fisher House, this science is put into action daily in simple and compelling ways. Just ask our families who make Fisher House their Home Away From Home. As Audrey, a recent guest wrote, "witnessing the happy bees in the lavender was the first step of my distressing". When asked which experience stood out, she recalled, with an emotional outpouring, her time at Fisher House. "Sitting in the garden knowing my husband was being cared for; Starting to let down walls of the 'caregiver mode' emotional isolation; Getting hugs from others who recognize the caregiver burnout signs and the support and even prayers I got from others; Love, support, and encouragement to keep up the

"With all the BAD in the world, Fisher House is a piece of HEAVEN. It reminds you that there is GOOD in the world."

journey of supporting my Veteran spouse; Peaceful place to renew my emotional health and calm my worries while not having my brain so focused on my husband's care; And not to worry about the added expense." "I would describe Fisher House as Heaven's doorstep".

The kitchen is most often cited as the best gathering space of all. Victoria, from California, described Fisher House as "a

so down as my husband was getting worse. She shared her story and I shared mine and we both left feeling better. It's like nothing you can experience in any inn or hotel, it's like coming home!"

Lisa took time to describe her 4 year Fisher House experience in a most heartfelt way: "This place is awesome. I don't know if we will be back as my husband is now in hospice, so if we don't

return, know that I have only gotten through all of this because of the Fisher House staff and people in it! God Bless."

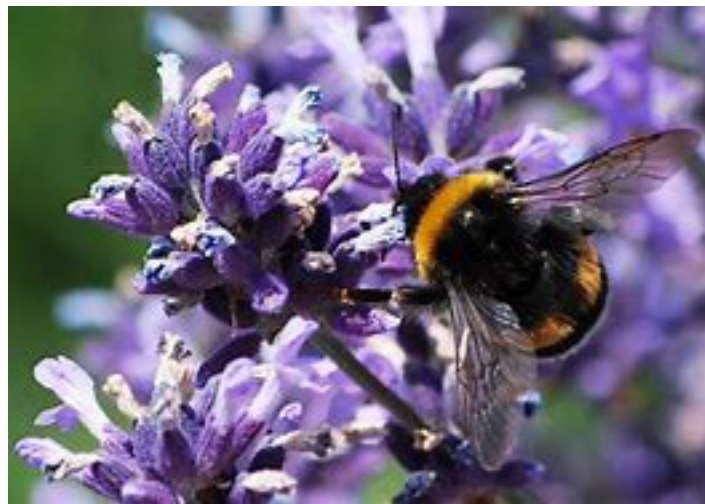
Dennis, (Anchorage) offered a familiar resounding thanks from the bottom of his heart like so many that come as our guests and leave as family. "This place is a slice of heaven restoring peace to the soul amidst so much angst and suffering".

Bonnie from Concrete agreed and felt she did not have the words to express her gratitude

for Fisher House. "With all the BAD in the world, Fisher House is a piece of HEAVEN. It reminds you that there is GOOD in the world. You don't have to look for the GOOD at Fisher House. You feel it the moment you walk through the door."

Our thanks to all the Staff, Donors, Volunteers, and Military and Veteran Families staying at Fisher House who help build resilience in the ever-expanding Family of Friends!

You've definitely got this down to a science!



home where people talk to each other over making meals. They share stories and helpful insights based upon their own experience. The Common Rooms are incredible places to heal – social space, dining room, T.V. room, play area for children, books, beautiful walkways and outdoor patios."

Patricia reinforced this idea of community "I was so looking forward to coming back to the island of relief when my husband was so ill. I could not ask for a more kind and restful environment. Coming in from a very long day, I sat back in the family room where another lady sat. I was feeling

Walking the Walk

Friends Soaring with Eagles

The time-honored Boy Scout Oath is considered to have three promises:

Duty to God and country,

Duty to other people,

Duty to self

For some, the call to serve comes at an early age. For Sam Petersen, it was a birthright, leaving little doubt about the direction his life would take. Guided by a family legacy of military service dating back to the Revolutionary War, his real influence was his grandfather, whose service during the Vietnam War earned him two Purple Hearts and Bronze Star for Valor. His grandfather stories of recovery solidified for Sam that, behind each soldier's injury and trauma, was a doctor returning them safely home to family. So inspired by this notion, Sam promptly set his sights on West Point and a career in medicine. He knew from the beginning that the journey would be challenging but worthwhile. AND he knew he was up to it!

Sam crossed paths with Fisher House as he sought out opportunities to complete his Eagle Scout project. The rigorous requirements necessary to achieve the rank of Eagle Scout take a sustained commitment, and years to fulfill. The Scout Spirit, an ideal attitude based upon the Scout Oath and Law, service, and leadership, must be demonstrated. This includes an extensive service project that the Scout plans, organizes, leads, and manages. Eagle Scout is the highest achievement or rank attainable in the Boy Scouting program. As you can imagine, only four percent of Boy Scouts are granted the rank of Eagle Scout.

After attending a Veterans Day of Service event, Sam learned about the Fisher House mission and was hooked. A visit to the Joint Base Lewis McChord Fisher

House was all he needed to conceive the idea for a playroom. He recalls his first impression that day with emotion, "there were only a few old toys scattered about for the kids who stay there to play with... I knew we could do a better job for them. I wanted to create a 'Peter Pan' type play space where they could use their imagination to take away their stress!"

With Sam, you can guess the rest of the story. He began to fundraise, created a social media campaign, organized toy age groups, and conducted his own corporate outreach to Barnes and Noble, Fred Meyer, Target, Wal-Mart, and Toys R Us - yielding donations from as far away as California. His playroom opened in 2015, coinciding with the unveiling of the second Fisher House on Joint Base Lewis McChord. When asked about his proudest moment of the entire project, he recalls, "it was not opening day or his award of the rank of Eagle Scout", he said, but a pivotal "moment much later". When he returned to the house to cook a guest dinner, a small girl took him by the hand, into the play room he had created, and introduced him to all the toys! "For me, that was the capstone of the project" Sam tells me.

But of course, our story doesn't end there. Younger brother Ben is walking a similar 'path less taken', with sights on Aeronautical Engineering and the Air Force Academy. Currently on track to achieve the rank of Eagle Scout, his Fitness Room Eagle Scout project at the original JBLM Fisher House has been approved. Ben is starting his awareness campaign, fundraising, and project planning in hopes of installing fitness equipment, television, and associated fitness room décor at the house. "It is hard for families to get to a gym when they are staying at Fisher House. Having a place to work out is good for stress reduction and health" he says.

As the interview with both Sam and Ben winds down, I cannot help but be



inspired by their relentless commitment and discipline. We know that when Ben, like Sam before him, is asked to tell the Scout Court how he has done his duty to God, how he has lived the Scout Oath and Scout Law in his everyday life, and how his understanding of the Scout Oath and Scout Law will guide his life in the future, the answers will come easily.

If you would like to contribute to Ben's Eagle Scout project at the JBLM Fisher House, you can contact him through Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound friends@fisherhousevaps.org or 206-501-8860.



Walking the Walk in Snohomish

Engaging the Community in Support of Our Military



In Snohomish County, actively engaged volunteers bring women together to travail for their families and communities. Waging war on complacency, steadfast members support a variety of causes and issues important to women. Whether it is creating a venue to educate and inform the electorate on key issues, creating paths for civil dialogue concerning public policy, or supporting women through efforts like those of the Hoff Foundation, the Snohomish County Republican Women's Club is committed to making a difference!

Above all, the members are resolute in their mission to "ensuring military veterans and their families a secure home and a fruitful life" says Judy, the current President. By engaging the

community, raising awareness, and building support, they hope to make more than a difference –they hope to change veteran's lives for the better. "Fisher House has been a priority since the beginning" says Betty, who coordinates community outreach supporting Fisher House. "Each month our club passes the collection basket for contributions to this valuable service to our hospitalized warriors. We hope our small part goes to helping families in need while their loved ones heal body and soul."

Further reinforcing this mission, the Club is committed to supporting our troops on the ground in combat. "Our members are very generous when it comes to our active military serving overseas" say Joyce who leads

this ministry. Monthly, money and donations are collected to purchase needed items and prepare treats to be shipped to our men and women serving in the field outposts where food and bare necessities are often in short supply. Regularly, Joyce packs up and sends the packages to an elite group of Navy Seals serving in the Middle East. The Postal Service has deemed her so efficient in packing the boxes, she quips, that "they claim they are losing money on my packages! God Bless our men and women in uniform" she says. On that, we can all agree!

Above: Members meet to discuss issues affecting their community.

"ensuring military veterans and their families a secure home and a fruitful life"

– Judy, Club President

Board Matters

Joel Hanson Wirasnik Joins 'Friends' Board



The Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound is pleased to announce that Joel Hanson Wirasnik has joined the 'Friends' Board as a Director. According to Joel, a life-long commitment to serve Veteran's, and a recent retirement following 38 years of service with the Department of Veterans Affairs, led him to serve Friends of Fisher House.

"It continues to be my personal

mission to faithfully serve the men, women and families that diligently share their time, talents and lives to protect our freedom. As a participating member of the Board of Directors, we work alongside each other, to provide housing and comfort for military families impacted by illness and injury."

Join us in welcoming Joel to the Family of Friends!



Joel jumps right in as he helps host a 'Guest Night Out' adventure! (Far right)

Board Matters

Rocco Bagala Joins 'Friends' Board



The Fisher House plays a vital role in providing support for our Veterans and their families. I have always valued the program's mission. I am excited to be on the Board of Directors and look forward to continuing to serve Veterans and their families.

During my career as a social work leader in the VA Puget

Sound Health Care System, I was actively involved with the development of the Fisher House admissions policies

and changing the admission criteria. Additionally, I have extensive involvement in social work leadership at the National, VISN and local levels. My experience of working with Veterans and their families has allowed me to develop a variety of skills and expertise in the field of social work. Finally, being an Army Veteran has allowed me knowledge of military culture along with insight to family involvement.

I welcome the opportunity to serve as a Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound Board member.

Sincerely,

Rocco P. Bagala

Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound

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Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound – “Because a Family’s Love is Good Medicine”

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State _____ Zip _____

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Enclosed is my donation for \$ _____

Please make checks payable to: Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound

This gift is in honor of:

This gift is in memory of: _____

This gift is anonymous. Please do not list my name in any published texts.

I was a guest of Fisher House (VA) (JBLM).

I would like to make a recurring gift using a VISA or MASTERCARD.

Please call me at _____

Please mail checks to Friends of Fisher House Puget Sound, PO Box 18253, Seattle, Washington 98118.



If you would like us to notify someone that you have made an honorary or memorial gift, please provide the name(s) and address(es) so we can send them a note:

You may also give online. Visit www.fisherhousevaps.org and click on the “Donate” button.