



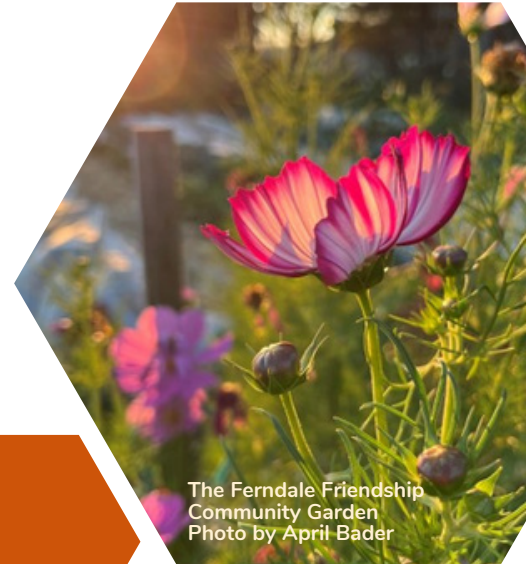
Ferndale
Community
Services

Serving North Whatcom County



Connect Ferndale's
History Walk
Photo by Jana Schofield

ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COMMUNITY 2022



The Ferndale Friendship
Community Garden
Photo by April Bader

www.ferndalecs.org



Ferndale
Community
Services

Serving North Whatcom County

ANNUAL REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2022

3,500

individuals served through
our programs

132

volunteers donated their
time and talents

\$650K

dollars raised for programs

5,213

instances of service

4,774

volunteer hours donated

Together we accomplished so much!

- ▶ Expanded hours and services provided at the Resource Center, including the addition of a Community Resource Navigator to provide 1:1 support
- ▶ Quadrupled the number of households served by our hygiene program, the Other Bank
- ▶ Helped 71 households avert water shut off
- ▶ Provided shelter in severe weather for 58 individuals
- ▶ Grew 6,636 pounds of produce for the Ferndale Food Bank
- ▶ Supported 61 Ferndale School District families with basic needs
- ▶ Provided 600 Ferndale kids with Christmas gifts and a warm item of clothing this Holiday season

And we grew our organization...

- ▶ Switched our model from a Cooperative of separate programs into a cohesive Community Center
- ▶ Hired our first Executive Director
- ▶ Hired a Community Resource Navigator
- ▶ Worked hard to build a strong community presence
- ▶ Solidified key relationships with the City of Ferndale, other providers, and the community
- ▶ Hosted our first annual fundraiser, Take Flight

Our mission is to understand and alleviate unmet needs by providing resources and connection. We envision a thriving community where everyone is supported and valued, and their basic needs are met.

www.ferndalecs.org

Our Story

Ferndale Community Services was established in 2007 with the guiding idea that we are stronger together, and when we work together we can strengthen Ferndale families and build community. This idea still holds true today. We are a grassroots, community organization whose mission is to understand and alleviate unmet needs by providing resources and connection.

In 2022, FCS went through significant changes. The organization hired its first ever Executive Director and a full time Community Resource Navigator. We also changed the way we operate by transforming from a cooperative of separate programs into a community center led by an Executive Director. The Board of Directors and staff created a new mission and vision statement that refocused on serving Ferndale and North Whatcom County. We expanded hours at the Resource Center and grew several programs, leading to our greatest community impact to date.

This year saw some programming changes as well. The Severe Weather Shelter became a permanent program. The Other Bank expanded to serve all low-income households in Ferndale and North Whatcom County, and more than quadrupled its impact. While the impacts of COVID-19 lingered, FCS responded by growing and strengthening our base of support to serve the community.

This report details the outcomes of the nine programs of Ferndale Community Services. It also provides a snapshot into the impacts they have within the community. FCS exists to build community, strengthen families and individuals, and connect Ferndale residents to services and resources that build safety, health, and wellbeing. We envision a thriving community where everyone is supported and their basic needs are met. The nine programs of Ferndale Community Services are:

- ▶ The Ferndale Community Resource Center
- ▶ The Ferndale Community Utility Fund
- ▶ The Other Bank
- ▶ The Holiday Giving Store
- ▶ The Ferndale Friendship Community Garden
- ▶ Family Funds
- ▶ Connect Ferndale
- ▶ The Volunteer Mobilization Center
- ▶ The Ferndale Severe Weather Shelter

OUR SPONSORS

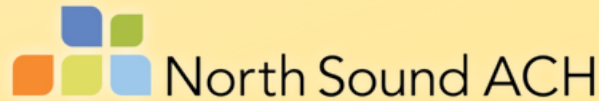


Whatcom County
HEALTH
Department

*Gayland
Gump &
Gail Goldie*



TAKE
AIM



Zion Lutheran Church



Black Pearl Bookkeeping



Christ Lutheran Church
love • live • share



The Ferndale Community Resource Center

Located at 5694 Second Avenue, the Community Resource Center provides community members with access and referrals to available assistance programs in the community, as well as direct services such as snacks, hygiene items, clothing and household goods, vouchers for showers, gas, and laundry, bus tickets, and a warm cup of coffee. The front desk is staffed by caring volunteers, the Community Resource Navigator, and the FCS Executive Director. Community members can come in to get assistance with a bill or basic need, “shop” for clothing, apply for a job, or get help with accessing community resources. The facility is small but houses a clothing bank, a lobby, and an area for job search.



In 2022, the Resource Center added a Community Resource Navigator. This full-time staff person is on-site to offer community members in-depth, one-on-one support with finding ways to meet their basic needs and reach their goals. The CRN can meet with clients in their homes or remotely as well, and is also present in the community to represent FCS. Since September, the CRN has assisted 15 individuals with accessing resources to address food, housing, transportation, medical care, behavioral health treatment, employment and more. Common referrals include the Ferndale Food Bank, Opportunity Council, Northwest Regional Council, Unity Care NW, and the Goodwill Job Training & Education Center. It can be challenging for folks to get into case management services so the CRN position is designed to be a low-barrier alternative; anyone can call or walk into the Resource Center to find support.

This year, the Resource Center partnered with Career Path Services to host two interns. These interns staffed the front desk, answered the phone, served guests, organized, and helped manage all front office tasks. The internship provides a learning experience and a work opportunity for them, and provides the Resource Center with their valuable presence. We are thankful to our interns Mary and Nathan for their contributions this year!

The Resource Center provided 3,672 instances of service for a variety of needs such as clothing, resource referral, housing, gas, bus, shower, and laundry vouchers, telephone and computer use, hygiene items, and snacks. Specifically, through a partnership with United Church of Ferndale, we distributed 135 shower vouchers. We provided 551 bus passes and 144 gas cards to help meet transportation needs. And we provided 108 laundry vouchers to community members who didn't have reliable access to a washer and dryer.

The Ferndale Community Resource Center

The Clothing Bank distributed a total of 41,945 pieces of clothing, with each person served getting an average of 6 pieces of clothing each time they visit. Additionally, we were able to donate over 27,875 items of clothing to the Ferndale Band Boosters for their fundraising efforts, in addition to donations to Whatcom Long Term Recovery Group, Bridge2Services, and the Ferndale School District. Our donations helped the Band Boosters raise just over \$6,000 to support band kids.

A dedicated team of staff and volunteers keep the Resource Center clean, stocked, and open, and provide friendly, supportive service to each person who walks through the doors. Our 17 volunteers and two interns provided 2,004 hours of service in 2022 to staff the front desk, sort clothing, and receive and distribute donations.

The Resource Center was supported by the incredible people of Ferndale, whose generosity with clothing, food, household and hygiene items, and cash donations went directly to the people who needed it. We were also supported by grants from the City of Ferndale, Washington State Department of Commerce, and numerous local churches including St. Joseph Catholic Church, United Church of Ferndale, and Christ Lutheran Church.





The Community Utility Fund

The Ferndale Community Utility Fund began in April of 2020 as a temporary, emergency program to support COVID impacted individuals and families. In 2022, the program became a permanent fixture at FCS, and serves low-income Ferndale residents who are City of Ferndale utility customers. The program helps with current and past due water and sewer account balances for qualifying households. Families can apply online or in-person for assistance. All payments are made directly to the City of Ferndale's Utility Billing Clerk.

This year, the Utility Fund served 71 Ferndale households, providing \$33,972.04 in assistance and averting shutoffs. The average grant amount was \$478. A team of two volunteers donated 102 hours to this program, processing applications, managing paperwork, and communicating with applicants. The program is supported by generous funding from the City of Ferndale and community members.



The Family Fund

The Family Fund program supports unhoused and low-income families with students enrolled in local schools by providing basic supplies like backpacks, clothing, transportation assistance, and other basic needs. Access to these items can make a real difference in a student's ability to succeed in school. Families work directly with staff at the District's Family Resource Center to access these resources.

In 2022, the Family Fund distributed snacks, hygiene items, clothing, and other needed supplies to all Ferndale School District buildings in Ferndale. The program also directly supported 61 individual students and their families with things like gas assistance, housing, hygiene supplies, clothing, and more. The program is supported by generous local donors and administered in partnership with Ferndale Schools.

The Other Bank

Since 2012, the Other Bank has provided basic hygiene products to low-income families in Ferndale. Families can get items like laundry detergent, dish soap, shampoo and conditioner, bar soap, feminine hygiene products, razors, diapers, and baby wipes on a weekly basis. The purpose of the program has been to ensure that no child has to go to school without access to hygiene items. In 2022, the program expanded to include all families and individuals in Ferndale and North Whatcom County who are low-income, instead of only serving families with children enrolled in Ferndale schools. This original purpose still stands and is also expanded: we want all low-income households to have the hygiene supplies they need to stay healthy.

The Other Bank also expanded to include seniors. Any senior over 60 years of age qualifies regardless of income. We added specific senior products like briefs and denture cleaner to ensure that their needs are met. Additionally, we added a second distribution day in the afternoon, so that working families can make it in to pick items up.

These changes resulted in big outcomes. In 2021, the Other Bank served 40 families. In 2022, we served a total of 181 households. This includes 332 adults, 337 children, and 16 seniors. We distributed 15,766 items, including 2,271 diapers, 2,249 rolls of toilet paper, 1,030 razors, 4,270 feminine pads, and 539 bars of soap, among many other things. A team of five volunteers donated 486 hours of time shopping for, stocking, and distributing items.

This program is supported by Christ Lutheran Church, Zion Lutheran Church, United Church of Ferndale, Superfeet, Walter E. Nelson Company, and many generous individual donors that provide products to keep our shelves full.



VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Luke Nelson & Jamy Pearson

Luke is a sophomore at Ferndale High School and volunteers because he wants to help his community—plus it looks great on college applications! “I like volunteering with the Other Bank because helping others builds strong character. I’m also learning empathy—it helps me to see things from others' viewpoints and be in their shoes for a minute. I have a lot to be thankful for.” Luke began volunteering in the fall of 2022 and donates two hours a week to bag customer orders in the Other Bank. “I’m learning good job skills like working under pressure. I’m listening to the order and filling it at the same time. I try to come up with a good strategy to fit everything in one bag.”



Jamy has been called a "professional volunteer." She has several gigs that total about 20 hours per week. "I wanted to expand my connections in Ferndale. I love Ferndale." Jamy volunteers in the Other Bank with Luke, spending a couple hours a week disbursing hygiene items to community members. "I like volunteering here because it brings smiles to peoples' faces. It sounds cheesy, but it's true—when you hand over the bag of stuff there seems to be this weight lifted. It's pretty sweet."



The Ferndale Severe Weather Shelter

The Severe Weather Shelter was piloted in 2021 and became a permanent program in 2022. The Shelter opens when specific weather conditions are met and fills the critical need for a safe, warm place to sleep during severe weather that could otherwise be life threatening. FCS partners with two churches to host the Shelter, United Church of Ferndale, the primary location, and Christ Lutheran Church, which serves as a backup location in case of a power outage. The Shelter's main site offers several different spaces for sleeping, a kitchen, two restrooms, and access to showers and laundry facilities.

In 2022, the Shelter served 58 individuals, averaging 10 guests per night, and was open for a total of 29 nights. Thirty-five volunteers donated just over 1,000 hours of time to keep the doors open. Also, this year the program received funding from the Whatcom County Health Department and the Washington State Department of Commerce to hire five part-time staff to coordinate and operate the Shelter. The Shelter operates from November through March, so the work continues this winter.

The Ferndale Friendship Community Garden

The Ferndale Friendship Community Garden opened in 2008 and provides 25 garden plots and ten hoop house plots for rent to individuals and families to plant and harvest their own vegetables. In addition, the Garden hosts the First Fruits Garden, a space dedicated to growing fresh produce for the Ferndale Food Bank. The Garden offers a place to grow food, connect with neighbors, and learn about gardening and growing.

2021 Garden membership included 20 households. Several gardeners rented multiple plots to grow different crops. Dedicated volunteers contributed over 150 hours of time to a variety of projects around the Garden this year, including basic gardening maintenance tasks like weeding, care of the herb garden, mowing and weed whacking.

This year we also replaced 15 aging bed borders, upgrading from wooden borders to cinderblock. These beds will last 20 years or more, and were made possible by a grant from the Washington State Department of Commerce.

The First Fruits Garden had a very successful year, donating 6,636 pounds of fresh produce to the Ferndale Food Bank. Manager of the First Fruits Garden, Greg Hart, and his team donated 575 hours of time sowing, weeding, maintaining, and harvesting.



The Holiday Giving Store

The Ferndale Holiday Giving Store began in 2003 to brighten the holidays for the children of low-income families in Ferndale. We believe that parents and guardians know best what their children would like most for the holidays and we provide them with the opportunity to choose gifts for them. The Holiday Giving Store is set up just like a store, but no money is exchanged, and gifts are free to families that qualify. Volunteers stock the store with popular gifts donated through the generosity of Ferndale residents, local businesses, and churches. Monetary donations and grants help us stock the store with warm items of clothing like hooded sweatshirts and pajamas.

In 2022, with our generous community's help, we served just over 600 children from 235 families. These businesses supported the Store by hosting giving trees as collection points for their patrons to donate: Locker Room Fitness, Grocery Outlet, Woods Coffee, Ferndale WECU, The Mail Stop, Ferndale City Hall, Mt. Baker Lanes, and Star Rentals. Ferndale School District staff also helped the Store by collecting gifts, donating money, and ensuring families in need were connected to our program. Many church congregations around town also gathered gifts for the Store, and Ferndale Christ the King Church has donated their facility for many years. The Store is also supported by charitable donations from the Ferndale Kiwanis, The Bedlington Family Foundation, Ferndale Police Association, The Ferndale Turkey Trot, Billy Slesk Insurance, Workskiff Inc., St. Mary's Guild, Murry Chiropractic, and many individual donors. 2022 was also our third year doing our Fill the Trailer event, and we always appreciate Miracle Food Network for loaning us their trailer.

The Holiday Giving Store relies on volunteers to run smoothly and begins every fall with a small core group that starts with planning. During operation, volunteers set the Store up, serve as personal shoppers for parents while keeping the Store organized and stocked, and pack up and clean the space when the Store closes. This year several local businesses sent volunteers to help, including Whatcom Land Title, Ferndale Capstone Physical Therapy, and Superfeet. In total, 52 volunteers donated 307 hours of time to make the Store a success.



Connect Ferndale

The mission of Connect Ferndale is to cultivate community growth and connection through civic participation and community building to advance inclusion, honor diversity, and encourage participation for everyone in our community.

In 2022, Connect Ferndale created and adopted a strategic plan that include four areas of focus: Education, community engagement, city government, and policing. Members also engaged in several meaningful community projects:



- ▶ Juneteenth Video Project—Connect Ferndale sponsored this beautiful film, directed by Remy Styrk, which was created to be a teaching tool for local school districts and features Black leaders from all around Whatcom County.
- ▶ The Ferndale History Walk—This project, developed in partnership with Cece White, a WWU History student, took guests on a 1.7-mile loop of Ferndale, stopping along the way to talk about some of Ferndale’s lesser-known history, including the significant impacts of many populations of color. 57 guests participated in two walks over the summer. Connect Ferndale plans to host the History Walk annually.
- ▶ Chardi Kala Dinners—Connect Ferndale co-sponsored and co-hosted a series of four dinners at two Sikh temples in Whatcom County. Over 300 guests came to the meals, where they had a chance to learn about Sikh culture and meet their Sikh neighbors. The primary goal of the meals was for members of the Sikh community to make connections and to reduce isolation. A delicious vegetarian Indian fest was served, followed by a tour of the temple.

The Volunteer Mobilization Center

The Volunteer Mobilization Center is an Emergency Worker Program volunteer unit that is dedicated to being ready for disasters by recruiting spontaneous volunteers as temporary State Emergency Workers. These workers are processed, trained, and placed according to their skills to serve in supportive roles to first responders and other professional crisis workers. They also receive official Washington State Temporary Volunteer Worker cards.



Thankfully, 2022 was a quiet year for county-wide emergencies. The VMC evaluated the processes used during both COVID and flooding events in 2020 and 2021, held a table-top exercise with the Whatcom County Sheriff’s Office, Division of Emergency Management to evaluate our proposed improvements, and increased our flexibility to respond in ways that support professional responders with volunteers.

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Mary In



Mary is a fireball. She brings energy and compassion to her work at the Resource Center. "Working at the Resource Center is a great experience and I get to help families work through their struggles and hard times." Mary can be found at the front desk, and many other areas of the Resource Center. She is always finding new ways to make the space fresh and welcoming. She greets and helps guests with compassion and kindness that allows her to quickly establish rapport and build trust. "I would love to work here for many more years because I have established good friendships with some of our regular guests. I love bringing my creativity to the office to brighten up the lounge area."

Our First Annual Fundraiser

In 2022, FCS hosted its first ever annual fundraiser—Take Flight. The evening featured a silent auction, delicious charcuterie from Yeah Baby Boards, wine, and a beer selection from FrinGe Brewing. Guests were treated to a passport activity where they “traveled” around the room to learn about the many programs of FCS. Over 200 guests attended, and many people learned about the important and impactful work of our organization. In total, the event raised \$8,379.



The event was sponsored by some incredibly generous local businesses and individuals, including Ferndale Grocery Outlet, FrinGe Brewing, Windermere by Ebright Wight, Gayland Gump and Gail Goldie, NW Living Group, Black Pearl Bookkeeping, Take Aim, and the Silver Reef Casino and Spa.

Looking Ahead - The Future is Bright

2022 was a time of incredible growth for our organization. We achieved some of our most notable accomplishments to date in terms of service to the community. We have built some incredible and critical partnership with local organizations, agencies, and funders. We have overhauled every aspect of operations for each program to dial in efficiency while still centering service to our patrons. We have shown up consistently to be a support to people in need. And we have worked hard to ensure that our community knows we are here.

In 2023, we plan to keep the momentum up. We will expand services to our unhoused neighbors, leveraging grant opportunities to increase staffing and supplies to help ensure vulnerable folks in our community have their basic needs met and are working toward a shelter solution. Our Board will dive into a strategic planning process to set a clear pathway for the next several years. And we will continue to work diligently to be present for everyone who walks through our door, donates, or volunteers with us.

