

OPAL HOMEOWNERS: INTEGRAL MEMBERS OF OUR COMMUNITY



Amber Minnis (top right) with family: Ashlee, Justin Paulsen, Emma, Michela, Katy

AMBER MINNIS:

ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Mother of Three
Foster Parent
Director, Kaleidoscope Day Care
Coach, Soccer and T-ball
Troop Leader, Girl Scouts
Coordinator, PTSA Roller Skating

For the past eight years Amber has served the families of Orcas Island as director of Kaleidoscope. When she divorced in 2002 with three young daughters, purchasing a home on the open market was not an option. With a master's degree in creative arts and education, Amber could have chosen to make a higher salary off-island, but owning an OPAL home has allowed her to do what she loves most and still afford to raise her children as third-generation islanders on Orcas, where she and they have strong family and community ties.

Kaleidoscope provides year-round daycare to working families, and many children who attend Kaleidoscope are there 50 hours a week. Amber offers counseling on available community resources as well as acting as a one-woman clearinghouse for services: she hands out winter jackets collected by Island Hardware; distributes Christmas trees; connects families to legal services, scholarships and gas vouchers; and makes sure they are included on the holiday giving tree.

In 2004, Amber completed state certification to provide a foster home on Orcas, the only one on the island. She couldn't stand the idea that children who had to be removed from their family would also be removed from their community – their extended family. Amber is teaching her daughters, "When you can help, you should."

Supporting the families of Orcas is a household theme: new partner Justin Paulsen of Terra Firma built OPAL's offices and apartments on the Reddick property, as well as the Lahari Ridge neighborhood, and he's currently building OPAL's newest affordable homes on Madrona Street.

It is very important to Amber to be able to provide a home for her own children and to know that it will always be there. "It was such a thrill to make the house our own. The kids helped to paint their own rooms. Each is unique – like the fences around Bonnie Brae. Together they create a patchwork-quilt feeling of warmth and belonging."

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BETH ROBERTS: “RICHEST WOMAN ON THIS ISLAND”

Barista, Kiki’s Café
Paper Delivery Route, The Islands’ Sounder
Volunteer, Senior Center
Cat Sorting and Feeding, Bonnie Brae Neighborhood

Chances are, Beth is the barista who draws your double-shot latte in the village, and she may also be the person who delivers your paper every Wednesday. She is certainly a familiar face in the community from her years of service at Island Market. Beth has lived on Orcas since 1994, when she moved here (with only four boxes) to be near her daughter. For the next eight years, she rented a small studio and then a one-bedroom apartment she shared with two grandchildren she was raising. The rent was going up about \$25 each year, and Beth was close to reaching her limit when an OPAL home at Bonnie Brae became available.

Beth and her late husband had a landscape contracting business in Arizona and so getting the yard planted around her OPAL home was a big priority. Beth saved up and took three weeks of vacation pay in order to landscape her house – to buy plants and have the yard graded. And she has made her OPAL house her own with warm colors, prolific houseplants, furniture handmade by friends and her collections of teddy bears and cats – both live and decorative. “You can express yourself in your own home, paint however you like, and the best part is you don’t have to worry about the rent going up or the landlord wanting to sell.” Beth adds, with a smile, “I’m the richest woman on this island because I have this house and these wonderful neighbors.”



Beth at Kiki’s

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DIDIER GINCIG & KATHRYN KIER, EMILIE & THADDEUS:

A FAMILY DEEPLY WOVEN INTO THE COMMUNITY



Gincig-Kier Family: Didier, Emilie, Earthball, Kathryn, Thaddeus

Director, Orcas Island Recreation Program
Teacher, Special Education for the Visually Impaired
Substitute Teacher, Orcas Public Schools
Volunteer, Wacky Wednesday After-School Program
Odd Fellows Communitarian
Cat Sitter, Body –Boat Blade (Kayak Shop)
Volunteer Theater Director
Member, Orcas Library Long-Range Planning Committee
Member, Teen Advisory Council for the Fun House
Earthball Distributor and Enthusiast
Community Babysitter
Volunteer, Youth Soccer Referee
Volunteers, Camp Four Winds

If you try to match the many community roles (above) with the members of this family, you might be surprised by who fits which hat. Here are a couple of hints: the family member who serves on the library's long-range planning committee is the youngest member by more than a decade and also aspires to direct the Wacky Wednesday After-School Program when she grows up. The family member who plans and facilitates all kinds of programs for kids through the Orcas Island Recreation Program can also be seen serving up Thanksgiving dinner to the community in the Odd Fellows Hall or marching in local parades with a gigantic photo-realistic Earthball. The teen advisory council member for the Fun House also played varsity soccer as a freshman at Orcas High School and has served as a volunteer dishwasher at Camp Four Winds. The family member who makes it possible for visually impaired students to succeed in their regular classrooms was a favorite teacher at Children's House for many years.

"My dad is a big person on Orcas." —*Emilie*

Didier, director of the Orcas Island Recreation Program, is often the first point of contact for families who are new to the community, and he supports island families by offering high-quality programs for kids all year round. Programs include Fall Soccer, Wacky Wednesday After-School Program, swim lessons, open swim – and a full summer program that offers outdoor education, field trips, crafts, writing workshops and sports camps. As an Odd Fellow, he helps maintain a community building for classes and events, delivers firewood to those in need and provides kindness and support to the dying, as has been the Odd Fellows tradition on Orcas since 1891. And Didier is on a mission with the Earthball (created, incidentally, by another Orcas Islander, Eric Morris) to educate people about our small planet and work toward a more global consciousness.

Owning an affordable home through OPAL gave Kathryn the ability to go back to school and earn her MA in Special Education, her teaching certificate and an endorsement in teaching orientation and mobility for the visually impaired. While working at the Children's House with a visually impaired student she wondered who would support that child through her school career on this small island. Kathryn learned Braille and was inspired to become that teacher herself, going back to school in Colorado full time during two summers and combining work and school during the rest of the year.

For Emilie (12) and Thaddeus (15), living in the Bonnie Brae neighborhood is a dream come true. Emilie thrives in the social network of neighbors and close community where she has rich relationships; Thaddeus likes being able to walk to school and to play basketball at the Fun House on weekends. It's easy to round up a couple of friends for a game of monopoly, to share movies and book lists or for an impromptu potluck dinner. It's a good fit for the family and the whole community benefits.

WHO ARE THE PEOPLE OF OPAL'S NEIGHBORHOODS?

THEY ARE THE PEOPLE THAT YOU MEET IN YOUR COMMUNITY EVERY SINGLE DAY.

OPAL HOMEOWNER OCCUPATIONS*

Acupuncturist • Animal Communicator • Artist • Author • Bike Shop Owner & Operator • Bookstore Clerk • Bookstore Espresso Stand Owner and Operator • Bookkeeper • Builder • Camp Director • Childbirth Educator • Dental Assistant • Dental Bookkeeper • Dental Hygienist • Dental Technician • Dog Trainer • Doula • Dress Shop Owner, Tres Fabu • Editor • Elder Care Provider • Electrician • Electronics Sales • Excursion Boat Owner/Operator • Feng Shui Consultant • Gardener • Graphic Designer • Grocery Store Clerk • Grocery Store Manager • Home Hospice Provider • Housecleaner • Jewelry and Body Products Maker • Landscape Contractor • Landscaper • Massage Therapist • Medical Office Assistant • Mental Health Counselor • Meter Reader, OPALCO • Musician • Naturalist Educator • Nonprofit Organization, Executive Director • Nurse • Nurse, Retired • Office Receptionist • Painter • Pet Sitter • Pharmacist Technician • Photographer • Poet • Potter, Orcas Island Pottery • Property Caretaker • Resort Manager • Restaurant Manager • Restaurant Wait Staff • School Bus Driver • School Counselor • Seamstress • Shamanic Practitioner • Silversmith • Small Business Owner • Stay-at-home Mom • Stock Market Research Analyst • Store Clerk • Store Owner • Teacher, After School Program • Teacher, Children's House • Teacher, Home School • Teacher, Music • Teacher, Orcas Montessori • Teacher, Piano • Teacher, Pottery • Teacher, Preschool • Teacher, Primary Grades • Teacher, Retired • Teacher, Substitute • Therapist • Theatre Program Manager, Orcas Center • Title Company Officer • Tradesperson (Welder, Electrician, Plumber, Tiler) • WA State Employment Worksource Technician • Writer

**Most homeowners have more than one job or occupation.*



OPAL HOMEOWNERS VOLUNTEER

A Cappella Singers • American Diabetes Association • Animal Protection Society • Art in the Schools • Artisan Fair • Camp Four Winds • Camp Indralaya • Children's House • Community Theater (Actor, Director) • Deer Harbor Estuary Group • Eastsound Off-Leash Dog Park • Eastsound Planning Review Committee, Current Chair • Faith in Action • Food Bank • Fun House • Girl Scouts, Leader • Healing Arts Center • Island Oil Spill Association • Lahari Hospice • Lions Club • Marine Mammal Stranding Network • MS Society • Oasis Home School • Odd Fellows • Olga Art Works • OPAL Community Land Trust** • OPAL Auction Coordinator • OPAL Auction Decorations Chair • OPAL Pie Booth Coordinator • OPAL Trustee • Orcas Animal Shelter • Orcas Center (Usher, Gardener, Actor, Director) • Orcas Choral Society • Orcas Daycare Association • Orcas Island Education Foundation • Orcas Island Prevention Partnership • Orcas Island Recreation Program (Coach, Referee) • Orcas Library • Orcas Montessori School • Orcas Open Arts • Orcas High School, Football Games Snack Bar • Orcas Public Schools • Olga Strawberry Council • PTSA • PTSA Roller Skating (Coordinator) • People for Puget Sound • Raincoast Conservation Society • Salmonberry School • Seniors—home meal delivery, appointment companion • Senior Center • Solid Waste Advisory Committee • Susan Komen Breast Cancer Foundation • Wolf Hollow • Women's Summit

***Nearly every household listed OPAL Community Land Trust as their number one volunteer commitment.*