



FALL 2012

# OPAL NEWSLETTER

HOUSING ISLAND PEOPLE, HELPING TO MAINTAIN ISLAND CHARACTER

## LAVENDER HOLLOW RENOVATIONS: DONE!

By the time you read this, the renovations and upgrades to the 22 apartments and 8 buildings of Lavender Hollow will be complete (or very close to it). And one can only imagine that everyone involved – tenants, construction crew, subcontractors, property managers, and OPAL staff – will all be celebrating with a big collective “Whew!”

**Suzanne (“Sam”) Jefferson**, who has lived at Lavender Hollow for 14 years, says “it feels like a new beginning.” Suzanne was one of seven tenants whose interiors were completely redone, including new carpet, appliances, cabinets, and heaters.



*Suzanne (“Sam”) Jefferson enjoys a cup of fresh coffee brewed in her renovated kitchen. If she looks familiar, you may recognize her from the Orcas Hotel, where she worked for more than 10 years.*

“We had to move everything out – to the last crumb,” said Suzanne. Her grandson Jordan, 13, an eighth-grader at Orcas Middle School, lives with her. “It was a lot of work and, yes, we had to put up with the construction noise and disruption and moving to another unit for six days. But the crew was great, OPAL was excellent, and the end result is worth it.”

The five-month, \$900,000 project, funded by the Washington State Housing Trust Fund, will extend the life of the 21-year-old complex, enhance ADA accessibility, improve energy efficiency, and ensure that the Orcas community has access to low-rent apartments for years to come.



*A snapshot of upgrades from Jeanne Beck, OPAL project manager:*

- ▶ Windows replaced: **128**
- ▶ Sliding glass doors replaced: **12**
- ▶ Square feet of siding removed: **16,250**
- ▶ Square feet of siding installed: **16,250**
- ▶ Gallons of paint used: **175**
- ▶ Hot water heaters replaced: **17**
- ▶ Square feet of carpet and flooring replaced: **4,818**
- ▶ Vent fans replaced: **47**

## SEVEN NEW HOMEOWNERS AND A NEW NEIGHBORHOOD

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So far this year, thanks to your ongoing support, OPAL staff members have worked closely with owners and new buyers on the sale of seven homes. Four houses are in existing neighborhoods (Bonnie Brae and Wild Rose Meadow), one is on Madrona Street in Eastsound, and two are in the new Oberon Meadow neighborhood across from the dog park. Another three houses – in Bonnie Brae, Wild Rose Meadow, and Oberon Meadow – are currently on the market and available to qualified buyers.

In August, **Ana and Julio Matal** became the first homeowners to move into Oberon Meadow. After living more than two years in OPAL's Reddick Apartments, they bought the Baker house, which was the first of three donated island homes moved to create OPAL's newest neighborhood.

"We first saw the house after it was moved to the site," said Julio. "Every weekend we would come and just park and look and dream."

Ana and Julio, who are originally from El Salvador, moved to Orcas nearly four years ago. He works in the kitchen at Camp Orkila and also does grounds maintenance and landscaping for the Orcas Hotel and OPAL's Reddick Apartments and rental office space. Ana works at Chimayo and also in the kitchen at Orkila. They are legal residents and plan to apply for U.S. citizenship next year.

Two years ago their son Raul and his family relocated from California to join them on Orcas. Raul works at the Orcas Hotel and at the Buck Bay Shellfish Farm. His wife, Flor, works at Orkila. Their two boys – Javier, 14, and Raul, 10 – attend Orcas Middle and Elementary schools. Both grandsons love to play soccer.

"My wife and I like to work together," said Julio. "Now our whole family on Orcas works together."

Ana and Julio, who are both quick to laugh, explained that Ana loved the house the minute she walked through the door. It has two bedrooms and one bath, lots of windows, and space for a small garden. After the open house, they talked with Julie Brunner, OPAL's housing manager. Then they started filling out "papers, papers, papers."

"We're very happy," said Julio. "It's the American dream. We love this place. We thank God and OPAL that we are able to buy this house. Thanks to OPAL, we are the first Salvadoran family to buy a house on Orcas. Without OPAL it would have been impossible for us."



*Ana and Julio Matal on the front porch of their new home in Oberon Meadow. Since moving in, the Mats have hung flower baskets, planted grass, installed stepping stones, and created flower beds. Thanks to OPAL supporters and the generosity of the Baker family, who donated the building and contributed toward having it moved, the little green house – much loved by several generations of Bakers – has found new life and purpose as the Matal's new home.*

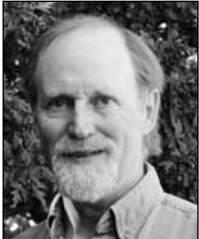
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### A Warm Welcome to Our Newest Homeowners

Vanessa Ryder and Sean Moriarity, <i>Oberon Meadow</i>	Tami Kopp, <i>Wild Rose Meadow</i>
Julio & Ana Matal, <i>Oberon Meadow</i>	Alex and Lorelee Flores, <i>Wild Rose Meadow</i>
Casey Hons and Rosannah Cope, <i>Wild Rose Meadow</i>	Katie Sellers, <i>Madrona Street</i>
	Jane Alden, <i>Bonnie Brae</i>

## OPAL HONORS NEWEST LIFETIME MEMBERS

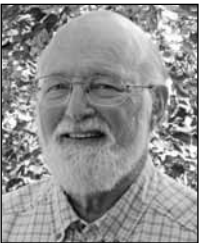
In 2011, OPAL's board instituted a new honorary membership category – Lifetime Member – and named Marilyn Anderson, Peter Fisher, Michael Sky, and Penny Sharp Sky as first recipients. This year, we gratefully add and honor 2012 Lifetime Members Michael Brennan, Bob Gamble, and Bob and Phyllis Henigson for all they have done for OPAL and the whole Orcas community. The following remarks are excerpts from the presentation during OPAL's September 22 Gala.



Michael Brennan

On August 19, 1985, **Michael Brennan** dropped anchor off Orcas Island, literally, and he has not left since. OPAL has a special place in Michael's heart. Starting in the late 1990s, Michael served on the OPAL property acquisition committee – a committee on which he still volunteers. Michael served on the board between 2002 and 2005 and helped OPAL through a time of tremendous growth: in property acquisition, development of the first rental properties, and the establishment of the Community Land Trust Alliance of the San Juan Islands.

Michael believes that “to maintain a healthy community, people of modest incomes need to be able to find good housing.” And as an investor, he likes to see the most “bang” for his philanthropic buck: “I don't like wasting resources, and OPAL is a very good way of putting money to work.” Equally important, Michael has come to appreciate OPAL neighborhoods as “supportive places to raise children.”



Bob Gamble

**Bob Gamble** first came to Orcas in 1978 and says it was “love at first sight.” In 1980, he stopped to pick up a hitchhiker: Winnie Adams, who became the love of his life and grounded his place in the islands – on both Orcas and Waldron.

Bob served on the OPAL board from 1997 to 2006. He was a key player in OPAL's development of a membership program and major donor campaigns. He led the effort to revise the resale policy – tying it to the Consumer Price Index – and always put emphasis on the important role OPAL plays in the lives of our island's children. Bob believes that “OPAL is part of the heart and soul of Orcas and our functioning community.”



Phyllis Henigson

**Phyllis and Bob Henigson** first discovered the San Juans on a vacation to visit a friend who had moved here. In 1995, they found a home that excited their imagination, and they moved to Orcas. Since that time, they have become deeply woven into the fabric of the Orcas community. Bob explained, “The best way to know a place is to get involved with it.”

The Henigsons got to know OPAL as “small but regular donors,” recalls Bob. The relationship deepened as Bob and Lisa Byers got to know each other through a land use matter. The level of their support increased, as did Bob's interest in providing guidance and advice. Last year, a home the Henigsons had purchased in Deer Harbor was donated to OPAL and became the second home at Oberon Meadow.

But Bob and Phyllis's generosity extends beyond what they donate financially. Some of their greatest contributions are as advisors to OPAL. Allen Smith, OPAL board president, says, “In the past decade we at OPAL have needed to make some big decisions, such as: Does it make sense to borrow \$430,000 to complete the Wild Rose Meadow neighborhood in the midst of a recession? Should we buy the Lavender Hollow apartments? At each decision point, the Henigsons helped us make the right decision.”



Bob Henigson



physical location: 286 Enchanted Forest Rd.

PO Box 1133  
Eastsound, WA 98245  
360-376-3191  
opalclt@opalclt.org  
www.opalclt.org

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*Full-time:* Lisa Byers, Executive Director  
*Part-time:* Jeanne Beck, Project Manager  
Julie Brunner, Housing Manager  
Beth Holmes, Office Manager  
Lety Hopper, Housing Services Coordinator  
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#### IN THIS ISSUE

Writing: Vicki Brems, Lisa Byers, Suzanne Olson  
Editing: Vicki Brems, Lisa Byers, Beth Holmes, Susan McBain  
Images: Chris Brems, Vicki Brems, Mandy Troxel, Judy Whiting  
Layout: Judy Whiting  
Design: Tina Rose

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## OPAL AWARDED THIRD PLACE IN NATIONAL COMPETITION



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*Linda C. Crompton, president and CEO, BoardSource, and Rene Deida, senior program director, Integrated Strategies, Prudential Foundation, congratulate Allen Smith and Lisa Byers on bringing home the bronze.*

OPAL's consensus-based decision-making practices were recognized with a third-place award in the national Prudential Leadership Awards for Exceptional Nonprofit Boards, a competition held by BoardSource.

OPAL's initial application included a narrative and video submittal (posted at <http://opalclt.org/news>), which earned us a place in the top five finalists. OPAL sent two representatives – executive director Lisa Byers and board president Allen Smith – to the BoardSource Leadership Forum in Chicago on September 15, where they answered questions from a panel of judges.

The judges were particularly interested in OPAL's consensus decision-making model, which is codified in the organization's bylaws. Recognizing that one-third of OPAL's trustees represent households with low incomes,

the founders of OPAL wanted to ensure that all trustees had an equal voice in governing the organization. Byers stated, "Our cultural norms in America often mean that people with more education and people who have been very successful in business are the ones who dominate decisions. The founders of OPAL sought to balance power, so that individuals who experience life with less income would have equal standing at the governance table. Making decisions by consensus means that we listen more deeply to one another."

Smith expanded on the idea by stating that the OPAL board exhibits "productive harmony." When asked by a judge why that is important, Smith explained, "When a group is dominated by some individuals, others are often deterred from speaking. The consensus model, as employed by OPAL, results in building trust among all members of the board. Board members know that their ideas are valued, and therefore are willing to express their reservations or concerns about an issue. As a result, we develop creative and durable solutions in an efficient manner."

As third-place finisher, OPAL received \$5,000 and will be featured in articles providing guidance to other nonprofits.