

October 18, 2013

Friends of Housing honored for extraordinary efforts

SEATTLE—The Washington State Housing Finance Commission has honored five professionals as “Friends of Housing” for their work to create, support and advocate for affordable housing statewide.

In addition, former **Governor Mike Lowry** was honored with the Margaret M. Sevy Affordable Housing Lifetime Achievement Award for his work on behalf of homeownership for farmworkers.

The 20th annual Friend of Housing awards were presented October 8 in a ceremony at the annual Housing Washington conference in Spokane.

The 2013 Friend of Housing awardees are:

- **Christina Pegg**, executive director of the highly effective Longview Housing Authority;
- **Leah Greenwood**, who led Affordable Community Environments in Vancouver, Wash., to merge with REACH Community Development;
- **Sue Cary**, who retired from Seattle’s Capitol Hill Housing in 2012 after a long career of creating and maintaining affordable housing with multiple organizations;
- The **Opportunity Council** of Bellingham, which organized its community to successfully pass a housing levy that will raise \$21 million for local housing over the next seven years;
- **Helen Stevenson**, who for more than 20 years has helped to develop and preserve affordable housing in Spokane and eastern Washington;
- **Gov. Mike Lowry** (Lifetime Achievement Award), who in his political career supported housing and services for the disadvantaged, founded Washington Agricultural Families Assistance (Wafa) in 2003. Wafa has constructed 73 safe, high-quality homes—homes purchased by farmworker families who once faced enormous barriers to homeownership.

Friend of Housing awards are presented each year to individuals or organizations who have made exceptional contributions to creating or supporting affordable housing in ways such as helping to solve housing problems, creating innovative financing mechanisms, or drafting legislation or policy that addresses the state’s housing needs.

“These five individuals exemplify the outstanding work and commitment that the Friend of Housing awards are meant to honor,” said Karen Miller, chair of the Housing Finance Commission.

Karen Miller herself was surprised with an award during the ceremony—a “Staff Recognition Award” for her longstanding leadership of the Commission, on which she has served since 1997, as well as her personal attention to the Commission’s staff and their work.

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Celebrating its 30th year in 2013, the [Washington State Housing Finance Commission](http://www.wshfc.org) is a publicly accountable, self-supporting team that works with lenders, investors, developers, nonprofit organizations and more to bring private investment dollars to benefit families and achieve public goals throughout Washington. The Commission has created and preserved more than 275,000 affordable homes across the state, while contributing more than \$42.5 billion and 240,000 jobs to the economy.



Honorees from left to right: Commission chair Karen Miller, Sue Cary, Greg Winter of Opportunity Council, Gov. Mike Lowry, Christina Pegg, Helen Stevenson and Leah Greenwood.



Opening doors to a better life

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About the Awardees:

Governor Mike Lowry ***Margaret M. Sevy Award***

Throughout his career in politics—as a member of the King County Council, a Congressman for the 7th District, and Washington state governor, Gov. Mike Lowry fought for environmental protection, civil rights, adequate funding for social services, and policies that protect and lift up those who are struggling in our communities. But he didn't stop after he left office: In 2003, he launched Washington Agricultural Family Assistance (WAFA) to help open a path for farmworkers to achieve homeownership. As a result of his in-the-trenches work to find land, organize volunteers and secure funding, WAFA has built 73 safe, high-quality homes for farmworkers in eastern Washington—homes now owned by families who once faced enormous barriers to buying a home.

Gov. Lowry has also continued working to end homelessness and to increase access to affordable homes for all families. He is a leading voice as co-chair of the National Alliance to End Homelessness and is active on the board of Sharehouse, which provides furniture to stock the homes of formerly homeless people in the Puget Sound area.

Sue Cary ***Friend of Housing***

Sue Cary recently retired from Capitol Hill Housing in November 2012 after 12 years as director of asset management and director of property development. She left behind her a legacy of successful affordable housing developments throughout the Northwest and continues to act as a mentor, volunteer and consultant to strengthen the affordable housing community. Career highlights include overseeing the purchase and rehabilitation of the Lake Washington Apartments in Rainier Beach as housing manager of South East Effective Development, and opening the Seattle office of Oakland-based A.F. Evans Company, overseeing the acquisition and preservation of affordable housing in the Pacific Northwest. She joined Capitol Hill Housing in 2000, overseeing CHH's portfolio of more than 1,100 units in 46 buildings.

Leah Greenwood ***Friend of Housing***

As executive director of Affordable Community Environments (ACE) in Vancouver, Wash., Leah Greenwood put the organization's mission and sustainability first and guided it through a merger with REACH Community Development, Inc. In 2008, Leah was hired as the housing development manager for ACE and within six months was appointed the Executive Director. Focused on putting the small organization on a path of greater financial sustainability, she realized that the small organization would be more effective as a subsidiary of REACH. Leah is now ACE Housing Development Project Manager at REACH Community Development.

Christina Pegg ***Friend of Housing***

As executive director of the Longview Housing Authority, Christina Pegg leads a nationally recognized organization and one of the state's most effective housing authorities. Along with the Joint Pacific County Housing Authority, her jurisdiction covers more than 5,000 square miles in rural southwest Washington with a portfolio of 1,400 Housing Choice vouchers and more than 300 rental units of affordable housing. She has tirelessly sought new ways to provide needed housing, creating programs that serve homeless veterans, victims of domestic violence and other special-needs populations. She also finds innovative ways to support other important community services; for example, working to ensure that the Family Finance Resource Center (FFRC) could continue its critical foreclosure counseling services. Chris is also active in local and national advocacy organizations, including the National Association of Housing and Redevelopment Officials (NAHRO).

Opportunity Council
Friend of Housing

Thanks to the leadership of Opportunity Council, \$21 million will be collected over the next seven years through a property tax levy. A community action agency as well as provider of housing services throughout Whatcom, Island and San Juan counties, Opportunity Council led the campaign to pass the levy. In November 2012, it was approved by 56 percent of voters in Bellingham—only the second city in Washington to do so. The Bellingham Home Fund thus established will assist those in need for years to come and is an example other communities can learn from and replicate.

Helen Stevenson
Friend of Housing

For more than 20 years, Helen Stevenson has not only been actively involved in the development and preservation of affordable housing in Spokane and eastern Washington, but has also been an outspoken advocate for changes in zoning and public-funding policies to address housing needs. When Spokane Housing Ventures chose to use the Low Income Housing Tax Credit program, it was Helen who established the policies, training programs and safeguards that gave SHV the capacity to participate in this highly regulated program. Today, of the 750 units that Spokane Housing Ventures owns and manages throughout Spokane and Lincoln counties, roughly 570 are financed through the tax-credit program in combination with other public and private resources. SHV's success in securing tax credits and achieving stellar program performance are due to Helen's diligent leadership. Helen has volunteered her time to local planning in Spokane's West Central neighborhood and helped the city set affordable-housing-friendly zoning regulations. She currently serves on the board of Salem Arms Community Housing and Commonwealth Agency, an Idaho nonprofit promoting affordable housing in a multiple states.