

ElderFriends and the Art of Blacksmithing

Among Friends

**The forge roared to life.
The firebrick blazed as it
absorbed the heat.**

Laura Heng threaded the metal bar – about 4 feet long and an inch wide – into the forge as Jack Slack watched closely.

The goal: Heat the middle few inches of the bar to a glowing bright red, then quickly remove the bar from the forge and bend it around a mold to create a U-shape.

It's a lesson in the art of blacksmithing. Jack, 78, is the teacher, the elder. Laura, at 32, is the apprentice and the friend.

Jack's wife, 73-year-old Jennifer, serves as the forge master and safety warden. Jack had a stroke in 2010, leaving his left side paralyzed. He offers blacksmith lessons from his wheelchair.

The Slacks and Heng met through Full Life Care's ElderFriends, a program that matches elders and volunteer participants. They usually get together every



ElderFriends Jack Slack and Laura Heng chat before the day's blacksmith lesson.

week, have a lesson and dinner. They chat, tell stories and laugh. Laura has come to visit for more than a year.

The Slacks have become part of her family, she said.

Jack and Jennifer met in San Francisco in the summer of 1967. Growing up in Midland, Michigan, Jack picked up "The Art of Blacksmithing" by Alex W. Bealen.

"That was the book that started it for a lot of blacksmiths," Jack said. "It talked about the skills that were being lost. It energized a lot of people, including me."

The Slacks eventually moved to Seattle. Jack ran The Blacksmith Shop in the Grand Central Building in Pioneer Square for 25 years, specializing in ornamental

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and architectural pieces. He was one of the first in the country to have an open smithy, where people could watch the process. Throughout his career, he shared his knowledge with others interested in the trade.

In 1979, Jack co-founded the Northwest Blacksmith Association, and saw the organization grow to more than 600 members.

Laura is enrolled at Seattle Central College, working to eventually obtain a doctorate in nurse practitioner. She grew up in Seattle, earned her degree in fashion design, then took a job in the industry in New York.

“It got to a point where I was asking why I am demanding discounts from a Taiwanese family when there was just a typhoon in Taiwan,” she said. “They didn’t know where their family was yet, and I’m having to send an email saying they are charging us too much money. I couldn’t do it anymore.”

She returned to Seattle in October 2015, and soon searched for volunteer opportunities, and found ElderFriends.

“It took a while to find a connection,” Laura said. “They wanted to find me someone special.”

THE LESSON

About an hour after they started the forge, it was almost time. The center of the metal bar was burning red hot.

“You have to practice what you’re going to do,” Jack said.

Jack and Jennifer had walked through the process before Laura arrived. Laura and Jack talked through the steps. Then Laura and Jennifer did practice drills. Those are the rules.

Jack has a number of ground rules: No texting, drinking, phone calls. No distractions. Metal glows at about 900 degrees Fahrenheit.



ElderFriends Laura Heng and Jennifer Slack mold the metal bar as part of a blacksmith lesson.

“

Jack and Jennifer are so smart. They teach me something every time.

Laura pulled out the metal strip, Jennifer took the other end. A couple of side steps to the mold, then they bent it into a nice U shape. Laura gave it a few taps in the center of the U, then sprayed it with cool water.

It took about 30 seconds. Afterward, they had dinner, chatted and watched TV together.

“They make me happy,” Laura said. “Jack and Jennifer are so smart. They teach me something every time.”

See the full story about the ElderFriends on our website: www.fulllifecare.org/blog/

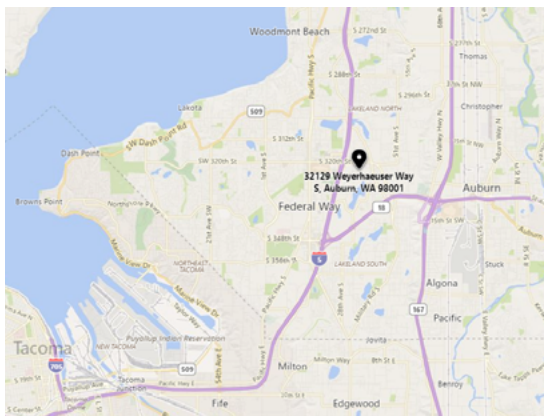
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New Federal Way Office Expands Our Services

Full Life Care has opened a new office in Federal Way, a move that will allow us to broaden our reach to the southern realms of King County and beyond.

This new office provides many opportunities for Full Life Care to better meet the needs in the area. A number of our current clients and employees live in the Federal Way area, and there is a large potential client base in those communities who will benefit from our services.



The following programs operate out of the new Federal Way office:

HOME CARE

Provides in-home support to elders and adults with disabilities. Services include personal care, meal preparation, shopping, help with ambulation, medications, cleaning, hygiene and more.

HEALTH HOME

Individuals living with chronic conditions and at high risk for hospitalization are paired with a care coordinator to identify and achieve personal goals. Services are provided on a long-term basis.

ROADS TO COMMUNITY LIVING

Provides housing transition services, helping individuals transition from institutional settings, such as hospitals and nursing homes, to community housing.

FOUNDATIONAL COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Ongoing support to help people find and keep stable, independent housing.

THE NEW OFFICE IS LOCATED AT:

32129 Weyerhaeuser Way S., east of I-5.

Main number: 206.231.0200 | **Fax number:** 206.231.0201

Full Life Care will hire new caregivers and other employees to help with this growth. Visit our careers page for openings: www.fulllifecare.org/careers

If you have any questions, please contact Rena Ferretti, Director of Community Based Services, at renamf@fulllifecare.org or call 206.473.2565.



HILL APPOINTED TO GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL

Kelly Hill, a licensed mental health counselor associate and a counselor at Full Life Care's Solstice Behavioral Health, was appointed to the Governor's Developmental Disabilities Council for Washington State. Gov. Jay Inslee appointed Kelly to join others in her industry to help develop statewide public policy recommendations that promote the values of self-determination, independence, inclusion, integration, and productivity for people with developmental disabilities.

BENEFIT LUNCHEON

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Nearly 400 friends gathered for our benefit luncheon October 25 to support Full Life Care and get to know more about the people we serve in the community.

Thanks to the generous support of our sponsors and our donors, we raised nearly \$125,000. These financial contributions give adults with chronic illness or disabilities, and their caregivers, the ability to live fuller lives. The goal of all of our programs is to support adults in the community so they are not living in isolation or needing to resort to institutional care. We do it regardless of income levels.

We offer special thanks to featured speaker Dr. Brian Wong and emcee Enrique Cerna.

Very special thank you to our clients and client families who shared their thoughts on “What Matters Most” for this year’s featured video. Find a link to our video on our website, fulllifecare.org.

A TRIBUTE TO NORA GIBSON

Also at the luncheon, Full Life Care offered a tribute to retiring executive director Nora Gibson. Nora served as Full Life Care’s leader from 1994 until early 2018 before transitioning the executive role to assistant director Dave Budd. Nora began in 1978 as an adult day services clinician, and is one of the region’s earliest visionaries of community-based long-term care for vulnerable adults. During her tenure, Full Life grew to serve more than 3,000 clients and their families every year, while developing new programs for underserved populations, such as persons living with acquired brain injury.

Mike Brandeberry, who served on the Full Life Care board and advisory board for more than 30 years including as board president, offered a wonderful tribute and presented Nora with a painting, “Swoon 1,” created by artist Frances Smersh. Frances was diagnosed with younger-onset Alzheimer’s disease. She and her husband, John, own Click Design That Fits, a West Seattle business Nora frequents. In 2016, Nora teamed up with the couple to plan “Rock the House,” a concert to raise awareness about persons with memory loss and their loved ones.



Executive Director Dave Budd, retiring Executive Director Nora Gibson, and Emcee Enrique Cerna



Dr. Brian Wong

Read more about Full Life Care’s annual benefit luncheon on our website: www.fulllifecare.org/blog/



Ageism in our Culture

By Dave Budd, Executive Director

During last year's Super Bowl, I saw a commercial for an investment company that struck home for me just how tolerant society can be when it comes to ageism.

The ad meant to convince people to start early when saving for retirement. It featured older adults who presumably did not save enough and went back to work during what we might consider their retirement years. It showed older people struggling to fit in next to their younger, more competent co-workers. An older lifeguard jogged next to two young lifeguards, ala "Baywatch." An older firefighter tried to hold onto a hose as he was whiplashed around. A stuntman was shocked after being lit on fire.

Frankly, the ad made them all look ridiculous and pitiful. The assumption was that the depictions were all in good fun, but they only served to dehumanize the older people featured.

This is ageism in action. Ageism is defined as stereotyping and discrimination against individuals or groups based on their age.

Ageism is so pervasive in our culture that many of us don't even notice it or realize how damaging it can be; damaging not just to our society but to our own psyches. How many of us think of our own aging as little more than a process of diminishment? When we lose our car keys, we call it a "senior moment." We start

to think we're not good enough when we don't get the job after the face-to-face interview.

While society continues to struggle with the issues of racism, sexism and disability discrimination, it's fair to say we have made some positive strides in bringing the issues to light. In general, we have a better appreciation of the richness of diversity, and have evolved our attitudes and the language we use in our daily conversations.

I am guilty of ageism too and I am sometimes hardly even aware when I am doing it. I look at a dated photo of myself and see a younger, better version of me. Why do I think this way? Aging is normal and natural, and something we all experience.

One of the many rewarding things about growing older is that you can grow your perspective on life and perhaps recognize profound truths when you encounter them.

Do you want to be inspired and awakened? Get online and search for the phrase: "let's end ageism." Watch Ashton Applewhite's TED Talk, and then take a few minutes to reflect on your attitudes toward age.

Challenge yourself to elevate your thinking and attitudes about aging in a way that will improve *all lives*. Not just for today's elders, but for the future-elders among us as well. This new awareness can be a gift to yourself and generations to come.



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