

CHANGING LIVES

The newsletter for the Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center



**Celebrating 25
Years of Serving
The San Juan Island
Community!**

IN THE BEGINNING...



TODAY



A Letter From Our Director

It's Our 25th Anniversary!

These days more than ever, building and nurturing community feels not just important, but essential. At the Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center, we are honored to have spent the past quarter-century walking alongside our neighbors, responding to challenges, celebrating milestones, and weaving a stronger social fabric for San Juan Island.



Our work is both simple and complex: at its core, we strive to ensure that every islander—regardless of age, background, or circumstance—has access to the resources they need to be healthy, safe, and able to thrive. That work takes many forms: helping a young family navigate new parenthood, supporting someone facing housing insecurity, offering mental health services, or simply providing a listening ear at the right moment.

Strong communities are built on diversity—of people, experiences, and ideas. They flourish when neighbors come together with care and commitment, working toward something greater than themselves. And healthy communities, like the people within them, are always evolving. They honor the wisdom of the past while remaining open to new energy, perspectives, and possibilities.

As we mark this 25-year milestone, we do so with deep gratitude for those who have carried the vision of the FRC forward—from our founders and longtime supporters to the staff, volunteers, and community members who show up every day to make a difference. Your commitment has helped create a place that people trust, turn to, and count on in times of joy and hardship alike.

In this special anniversary issue, we invite you to look back with us at the early years of the Family Resource Center—the stories, people, and programs that shaped our journey. We also hope you'll join us in imagining what the next 25 years might hold. What does a thriving San Juan Island community look like to you? What dreams do you have for our collective future?

Thank you for being part of this work. We wouldn't be here without you—and we're excited to continue growing together.

With gratitude and hope,

Jennifer Armstrong

JLSFRC Executive Director



THE EARLY YEARS



A Vision That Changed Lives: Joyce Sobel and the Foundation of the Family Resource Center

In the 1990s, longtime islander Joyce Sobel recognized a growing need: young families in our community were struggling to find the support they needed during some of the most critical times in their lives. Joyce imagined a welcoming center where parents could easily access resources, connect with other families through free programs, or simply have a safe, supportive place to drop in whenever they needed it.

Her vision became the foundation of the Family Resource Center. Guided by her deep belief in the power of early intervention, Joyce helped shape the FRC's mission—prioritizing strong starts for children through developmental playgroups, youth mentoring, and parenting support.

Joyce's instincts were spot-on. Over the past 25 years, a multitude of national studies have confirmed what she knew from the beginning: every \$1 invested in early childhood support and education yields a return of \$4 to \$9 in long-term benefits. Today, the FRC's weekly playgroups, parenting supports, cooperative childcare, and youth programs continue to nurture the health, education, and development of young children and their parents. These programs not only strengthen families now—they also help lay the foundation for increased earnings, employment, and community safety for generations to come.

BEHIND THE SCENES



Marty Huleatte – From the earliest days of the Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center, Marty Huleatte has been a steadfast and driving force. Originally invited by Samantha Bryner to join the founding board alongside Carol Marble and Samantha herself, Marty said yes—and has remained deeply involved ever since. She served on the board for 20 years and continues to serve today as Chair Emerita.

Marty was instrumental in helping the FRC establish its 501(c)(3) status and, from the beginning, brought a thoughtful, solution-oriented presence to the team. As the center grew, so did its tech needs—and Marty became the go-to person for anything involving computers. She continues to generously lend her time and expertise, patiently helping staff set up laptops, troubleshoot systems, and ensure they have access to the tools they need to do their best work.

What has always stood out is Marty’s recognition of the heart of the organization. She saw early on how devoted Joyce was to the mission—especially in the realm of Early Childhood Education—and how that dedication earned widespread respect, even in moments of disagreement. Marty’s quiet leadership, grounded support, and enduring commitment have helped shape the FRC into a trusted, resilient, and forward-moving resource for families.

Gail Leschine-Seitz – Gail has been involved with the Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center since its very beginning, working alongside Joyce to support island families through their shared passion for early childhood development. In those formative years, Gail played a key role in promoting the Readiness to Learn program at Friday Harbor Elementary—helping ensure that the youngest members of our community had a strong start and a sense of belonging.

Over the years, Gail’s deep commitment to island youth, literacy, and now housing remained a constant, even as her professional path led her to new roles. No matter where she went, her connection to the Family Resource Center always pulled her back. Again and again, she returned to lend her skills and energy to programs that support families and help the community thrive.

For more than 20 years, Gail has been a trusted partner in this work—quietly shaping programs, building bridges between systems, and ensuring that the needs of children and families remain front and center. Her enduring presence is a testament to the power of long-term commitment, and we are deeply grateful for the impact she continues to make on San Juan Island.



Betsey Ferguson - For years, Betsey has been a steady, compassionate presence at the heart of our baby groups. Her love for the littlest members of our community is undeniable—but it’s her uncanny ability to be exactly where she’s needed most that has left the deepest impact.

Val Curtis shares one moment she’ll never forget:

“With my second kiddo, I was experiencing postpartum depression. One day, I dragged myself to baby group because I knew I needed a break. When I walked in, every mom in the room was a former student of mine, and I immediately felt like turning around. But Betsey took one look at me, scanned the room, and understood everything in an instant. She gently scooped up my daughter and told me to go for a walk or have a quiet chat with Joyce. That moment meant everything to me. And that’s just who Betsey is—intuitive, kind, and always showing up for others in the way they need most.”

Though she has retired from coordinating the baby groups, Betsey continues to show up weekly at the center’s SJI Childcare Cooperative, offering her time, care, and wisdom. The ripples of her kindness extend far beyond those four walls. Over the years, Betsey has supported hundreds of babies, parents, and guardians—each one touched by her warmth, her presence, and her gentle encouragement. The love she’s poured into this community lives on through the families she’s uplifted and the connections she’s helped foster.

Samantha Bryner - Samantha was the very first board member of the Family Resource Center—and from the very beginning, she was inspired by Joyce’s ability to bring people together. One of the things that impressed her most was how Joyce organized early focus groups to help shape the vision for the center. These gatherings brought men and women from the community together to openly discuss where support was most needed and how the FRC could best serve island families.

Samantha also reflected on the formation of the FRC’s first physical space—two buildings joined together by the volunteer efforts of a community that Joyce had rallied with incredible energy. “It was a huge improvement from the small room we had over the pool at the Fitness Center,” she recalled. Joyce brought together everyone from high school students and architects to painters, roofers, and donors who filled the space with furniture and rugs.

In those early days, much of the work centered on building awareness and understanding of what the Family Resource Center was and why it mattered. Thank you Samantha for your 23 years of service and for helping to set the foundation of a legacy that continues to grow.



BY THE NUMBERS - THEN & NOW



2000
NONPROFIT STATUS GAINED

EMPLOYEES



2000 2025
1.4 **23**

BOARD MEMBERS



2000 2025
5 **11**

LOCATIONS



2000 2025
1 **3**
JLSFRC
New Day Recovery Cafe
San Juan Island Childcare Cooperative

Over the past 25 years, each year brought new opportunities to grow, respond, and support. This timeline highlights the launch dates of key programs and services, marking our journey to meet the evolving needs of San Juan Islanders.

PROGRAMS

Since opening its doors, the Joyce L. Sobel Family Resource Center has grown and adapted to meet the changing needs of San Juan Island families. What began with baby bags and toddler groups has expanded into a wide range of programs supporting children, teens, parents, and caregivers. Each new initiative reflects our commitment to strengthening families, building resilience, and fostering a thriving community. Here's a look at how our services have evolved over the years.

2000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baby Bags Baby & Toddler Groups
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Love & Logic Strengthening Families Youth Mentoring
2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Head Start Primary Intervention Program
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kindergarten Transitions
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Padres Todos Juntos (Spanish Language early childhood supports)
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> SafeCare Home Visiting Program
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annual Screen-Free Week Events
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parent to Parent Program Strengthening Families Program First Generation Mentoring (ages 16-21)
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> YAAS! Group (for teens and young adults with disabilities)
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FRC Learning Pod (2020-21 school year) Middle School Group Mentoring (ages 11-14)
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer Childcare Pod
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Childcare Cooperative Elementary School Group Mentoring Overdose Education & Prevention Initiative
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Family Reading Engagement

SERVICES

At the heart of the Family Resource Center is a deep commitment to walking alongside islanders through life's challenges. Over the years, we've expanded our direct services to meet the growing and shifting needs of our community - from housing and utility assistance to transportation, nutrition, and case management. Each program is designed to reduce barriers, promote stability, and ensure that everyone has access to the essentials they need to live healthy, secure, and connected lives.

2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rental/Housing Assistance Utilities Assistance DSHS Enrollment Assistance
2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical Transportation Assistance
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transportation Voucher Program
2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case Management Weatherization + Health Program
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spanish Language Case Management
2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household Essentials Program
2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Literacy Workshops & Consults Nutrition Supports (36 Weekends, Fresh Bucks)
2020	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Summer Nutrition Program for Children COVID-19 Emergency Reports
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 Quarantine Support



HEALTH & WELLNESS

Health is more than just medical care - it's about feeling supported, understood, and connected. Our health and behavioral services have grown to reflect the diverse needs of our island community. From counseling and prescription support to recovery services, insurance navigation, and culturally responsive care, we work to ensure that every islander - regardless of income, language, or life circumstance - can access the support they need to thrive. These programs reflect our belief that everyone deserves compassionate, dignified care on their path to wellness.

2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income-based Counseling Program Emergency Prescription Assistance
2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medical bill navigation assistance
2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Health Insurance Navigation/Enrollment
2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Island Neighbors - Volunteer-based Supports for Vulnerable Islanders
2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Medicare Navigation/Enrollment (SHIBA)
2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Behavioral Health Recovery Peer Support Latinx Healthcare Advisory Committee
2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recovery Cafe Latinx Community Health Worker Program
2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perinatal Mental Health Initiative



PIVOTAL MOMENTS

Milestones in the Journey of the JLSFRC



2000

After years of community fundraising and hard work, the Family Resource Center proudly opened the doors to its first permanent “home” at 476 Market Street—a welcoming space for families to find support, connection, and hope.

2008

In the wake of the Great Recession, the San Juan Island Community Foundation launched the Critical Needs Task Force, led by Charlie Anderson and Pamela Gross. This community-driven initiative brought together local leaders, nonprofits, and service providers—including the JLSFRC—to identify the most urgent needs facing islanders. The partnership resulted in immediate grant funding for food, housing, transportation, and preschool scholarships, while also laying the groundwork for long-term solutions such as expanded health care access. This collaboration marked the beginning of a powerful and lasting alliance between SJICF and JLSFRC, one that continues to support and strengthen island life to this day.



2010

Partnering with San Juan County Health & Community Services, JLSFRC launched the Community Wellness Program, providing income-based mental health counseling to islanders. What began as a small program has grown to serve over 120 people each year on San Juan Island, ensuring access to behavioral health support for all.

2014

With the official launch of Washington’s Apple Health Program—bringing free health insurance to low-income residents—JLSFRC sprang into action. By helping qualified islanders enroll, many were able to access medical care for the first time in years. By 2016, San Juan County ranked #1 in the state for Apple Health enrollments, contributing to its reputation as one of the healthiest counties in the nation.



2019

In September, JLSFRC broke ground to expand its facility—just months before the COVID-19 pandemic changed everything. While construction was underway, staff met with families in a temporary kiosk and even a 1960s trailer in the parking lot. Through it all, the FRC kept its doors open, providing critical emergency services, connection, and hope during one of the community’s most challenging times. Staff even created an on-site “learning pod” for children who couldn’t access remote schooling at home.



2022

A year of tremendous growth! The FRC launched several new initiatives: the New Day Recovery Café, the San Juan Island Childcare Cooperative, and the Community Health Worker Healthcare Access Initiative. Each effort represents a powerful commitment to building greater equity, opportunity, and wellness for islanders of all ages and backgrounds.

2025

We Want To Know

What is your vision for the next 25 years of a thriving, connected island community?



PLEASE SHARE



LOOKING AHEAD

How do we carry forward the FRC's mission of ensuring all islanders have what they need to be healthy, safe, and productive?



Investing in our island's future - our kids

We are shaping a brighter future for our children—starting now. At the heart of every FRC initiative is a focus on nurturing young islanders' social and emotional development. From toddler playgroups to teen support circles, our programs are laying the foundation for lifelong wellbeing, strong relationships, and thriving communities.

A place where help feels like hope

The Family Resource Center will continue to be a safe, welcoming space where islanders feel empowered to seek help. We believe that no one should face hardship alone. Through strong partnerships and collaboration, we are working hard to build a community where everyone has access to nutritious food, secure housing, quality healthcare, positive social opportunities and a genuine sense of belonging.



Mental wellness for all, at every age

Islanders are embracing the vital importance of mental health at every stage of life. From preschool play therapy to our New Day Recovery Café and memory care programs, JLSFRC is expanding behavioral health and recovery services that foster resilience, healing, and connection. We are committed to breaking stigma and ensuring mental wellness is a right—not a privilege.



Resilience rooted in community

While we can't predict the future, the past 25 years have shown us what truly works: grassroots action, locally grown solutions, and the power of neighbors supporting neighbors. That's why our motto—Islanders Helping Islanders—will always guide us forward.



Join us in creating a more connected, compassionate island—together.



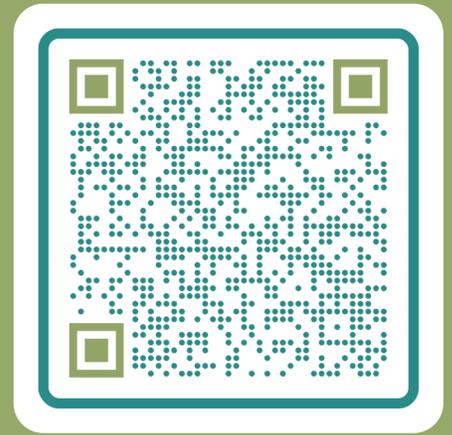
SPRING INTO ACTION

Celebrate Now

To celebrate our 25th anniversary of serving San Juan Islanders, we are holding a fundraiser to help ensure our ability to continue the necessary programs and services that we currently provide and those that we develop a need for in the future. As you can see throughout this newsletter, events occur that we need to respond to in order to best serve our neighbors and we are currently seeing a rapid uptick in the number of requests for assistance in our basic services.

Please consider a monthly or one time donation to support our ability to Spring into Action.

This would also be a wonderful time to consider a Legacy gift. With a legacy gift to JLSFRC, you ensure that the positive impacts of our programs and services continue to nurture a San Juan Island that is compassionate, resourceful and resilient.



Donate Today

*Make lasting change
that you believe in.*

If you would like to learn more, please contact us at
(360)378-5246.

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BIRTHDAY PARTY

September 14th
3 - 5 PM

at **Brickworks**

JLSFRC STAFF

Jennifer Armstrong
Jenn Allen
Clayton Banry
Heather Belt
Mary Blevins
Colleen Clancy
Tim Clark
Jen DeShon
Leah Gaye
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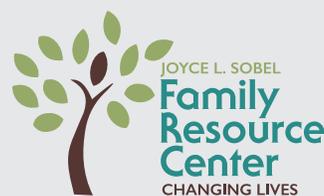
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