



Wilkes East Neighborhood Newsletter

"Diversity, Harmony, Community - Together we can make a difference!"

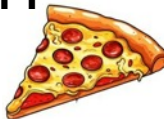
Gresham, Oregon USA

wilkeseastna.org

Fall 2026

PIZZA PARTY

- GAMES!
- PRIZES!



Monday, Nov 9th, 6:30 p.m.

Public Meeting! You're Invited!

The Wilkes East Neighborhood Association invites you to our fall meeting, the last one for 2026! In this meeting we need to approve WENA bylaws and elect board members!

Please plan to come for pizza and cookies at 6:30 p.m. and the meeting at 7 p.m.

Come to the Moose Lodge at 6:30 PM on Nov 9, and have some pizza and cookies! You can work on the answers to the Bylaws Game questions with your neighbors. During the meeting, we will ask the game questions, and anyone who gets all the correct answers will get a prize! See <https://www.wilkeseastna.org/node/3787> for the questions.

All board positions are up for election. To join the board, simply show up to the November 9 meeting and nominate yourself!

WHO'S ON THE WENA BALLOT?

WENA SLATE OF CANDIDATES:

- President -- Dimitrios Zurkos
- Vice President - no candidate
- Secretary - Nicole Simon
- Treasurer - no candidate
- Land Use Officer - Janet Unruh
- Publications - Bob Lundbom
- Member at Large - Robyn and Eric El Kay
- Member at Large - Elane Escobedo
- Member at Large - Claudette Naylor

Date: Monday, Nov 9, 2026

Time: Pizza and cookies at 6:30 p.m.,
Fall Meeting at 7PM.

Location: Moose Lodge, 16411 NE Halsey St., Gresham, OR 97230

For questions, please email the board at:
wilkeseastna@gmail.com ■

Se Habla
Español



It's Time to Vote on WENA's Bylaws!

Fall Meeting, Nov. 9, at 7 p.m.

We want you to participate! Neighborhood association bylaws are important because they define how the association operates, including decision-making processes, board governance, and member rights.

Understanding these bylaws helps ensure accountability, transparency, and effective communication within the community.

BYLAWS...

- Define Operations
- Establish Member Rights
- Promote Accountability
- Ensure Transparency



As a member of WENA, you have the right to review the bylaws, comment on them, and vote on their adoption.. We will vote to adopt the bylaws at our November public meeting.

The November public meeting will be held on November 9, 2026 at 7 p.m. at the Moose Lodge, [16411 NE Halsey St.](#)

Read,
download, or
print your
copy of the
new bylaws!



Web: [wilkeseastna.org/files/wena_bylaws_2026.pdf](https://www.wilkeseastna.org/files/wena_bylaws_2026.pdf)

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

- WENA Fall Meeting - Nov 9, 7 PM
- Vote for WENA Bylaws - Nov 9
- Vote for WENA Board Members - Nov 9
- Food and Hunger in Gresham
- Power of Intergenerational Solidarity

WENA SURVEY RESULTS

WENA conducted a survey in August 2026 to collect residents' opinions on neighborhood satisfaction, concerns, and involvement. We wanted to learn what direction residents think the association should take in the coming months to guide Wilkes East Neighborhood Association activities.

We only had 26 completed surveys, so hopefully, next year we'll get a bigger response.

Most respondents have lived in Wilkes East over five years. Many appreciate the friendly, diverse community, parks, and central location. Commonly valued qualities include safety, friendliness, natural beauty, and proximity to amenities.

Top concerns are safety, homelessness, traffic speed, and illegal parking or camping. Many respondents would like the association to prioritize emergency planning, community building, and neighborhood safety over the next year.

About 62% of survey respondents are aware of the neighborhood association. The preferred update methods include email and community meetings. Over half are likely or very likely to attend events; interest in involvement is high, and some volunteers are already active.

Survey respondents indicated that they would like to see cleanups, block parties, safety meetings, farmers' markets, and cultural events. There was a strong interest in community projects, social gatherings, better communication, and utilizing parks more.

Concerns include affordability, crime, drug activity, and speeding. Respondents request increased patrols, speed bumps, and grants for safety improvements. ■

Mark Your Calendar!
Wilkes East Neighborhood

Fall 2026 Meeting
November 9th • 7PM

Moose Lodge • 16411 NE Halsey

Wilkes East Neighborhood Association Newsletter

Published three times a year. Over 1500 copies distributed throughout Wilkes East.

The Wilkes East Neighborhood Association (WENA) is a nonprofit organization in Gresham, Oregon.

Deadline for submission is the 10th of the month prior to publication. WENA reserves all rights, and all copy may be edited for clarity and length. Download a PDF of this newsletter online at: wilkeaseastna.org/newsletter.htm.

BOARD MEMBERS

Chair (Vacant)
chair@wilkeaseastna.org
Vice Chair (Vacant)
vicechair@wilkeaseastna.org
Secretary.....Janet Unruh
secretary@wilkeaseastna.org
Treasurer Claudette Naylor
treasurer@wilkeaseastna.org
Land Use Janet Unruh
landuse@wilkeaseastna.org
At-Large..... Robyn El Kay
Eric El Kay
member2@wilkeaseastna.org
Bob Lundbom
webmaster@wilkeaseastna.org

BOARD MEETINGS

Meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 6:30PM. See wilkeaseastna.org for details.

CONTACT US

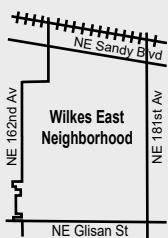
Email: info@wilkeaseastna.org.
Postal Mail: PO Box 194, Fairview OR 97024

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Get involved. Let us know how you'd like to help.
Email info@wilkeaseastna.org for details.

SPECIAL THANKS

- The newsletter is funded in part through a generous grant from the City of Gresham.
- Printing by Hush Ink / Print Results. 971-279-4960



info@rideconnection.org

Ride
CONNECTION

503.226.0700

Providing responsive, accessible transportation at no cost for seniors and people with disabilities
www.rideconnection.org

WENA NEEDS A NEW TREASURER

The time commitment is usually only a few hours each month

It's basic stuff—you would attend the monthly WENA Board meeting and take care of depositing money, paying approved bills, keeping the checkbook up to date, and giving the board a brief report. Our current treasurer, Claudette, will train you and help you learn the procedures.

Most months, the job requires attention only once or twice and takes a couple of hours. Occasionally, you may need to go to the bank, pick up mail at the WENA PO Box, or mail a payment.

The treasurer does not decide which expenses WENA will pay. Bills and other expenditures are reported to the board and approved by a vote. Once an expense is approved, the treasurer writes the check and pays the bill. Checks over \$100 require the signatures of both the treasurer and a second board member who is authorized to sign on the account.

For more information, email us at wilkeaseastna@gmail.com ■

THIMBLEBERRY COLLABORATIVE FARM

By Janet Unruh, WENA Board Member

My family and I visited Thimbleberry Collaborative Farm (<https://thimbleberrycollaborativefarm.org/>) for its fall harvest festival, and we were impressed with the operation. The farm is on five gorgeous acres just outside Boring, Oregon.

We had fresh-pressed apple cider and tacos, listened to live music, and took a tour of the farm. I was interested in visiting because I had read that the farm **donated 11,000 pounds of fresh produce** to people in need in the East Multnomah and Clackamas counties (12,000 pounds last year). I learned that they distribute food through a farm-to-clinic program with Wallace Medical Concern and Milk Crate Kitchen, and to food pantries such as SnowCap, Birch, and Sandy Community Action Center. They're able to do this work with support from grants and donations as a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

The farm offers **educational programs for K-12 students** in Multnomah and Clackamas counties, including field trips and classroom visits focused on growing and cooking seasonal produce, and environmental stewardship. Lessons are customized to each group, with hands-on activities that make learning fun. The farm also works with local organizations to provide monthly farm visits and cooking

BECOME A WENA BOARD MEMBER!

Our annual election of officers is on November 9, 2026, at 7 p.m.

- Elections are held during our annual November public meeting
- All positions are up for election.
- No experience is required.
- Nominate yourself!
- Become a board member!
- Help shape our neighborhood.

Board member responsibilities

- Board membership is a one-year commitment that offers valuable experience and knowledge you can use long afterward.

Board positions

- President (or chair)
- Vice president (or vice chair)
- Secretary
- Treasurer
- Land Use Officer
- Members-at-Large

Contact us! wilkeaseastna@gmail.com

It's a great opportunity and experience, whether you've been on a board before or you're considering the idea for the first time. ■

experiences for young people experiencing homelessness.

During the tour, I learned that they **don't use pesticides, herbicides, or chemical fertilizers**. They use low- or no-till methods and work to build the soil biome. This means a lot of work is done by hand, including weeding, harvesting, preparing sections of the farm for winter, and leaving roots in place where possible. They also grow blueberries and they have apple, plum, pear, and cherry orchards. The farm has hens and ducks, whose manure is used to improve soil fertility. The birds also help control insects.

The farm participates in an **apprenticeship program** through Oregon Farm Corps. Apprentices can gain hands-on experience with raising vegetables, culinary herbs, fruit, cut flowers, poultry and eggs, and managing orchards. For more information, search the Internet for "**oregon farm corps host farms thimbleberry**."

I found Thimbleberry to be an unusual and worthwhile undertaking and decided to make a monthly donation. If you'd like to support their work, you can donate at givebutter.com/vNbNAN, attend an event, or volunteer. Their activities include bird-watching, pickling, winter cocktails, and more. For information about upcoming events, search the Internet for "**thimbleberry events**." ■

Did you know? The real name for a hashtag is an octothorpe

FOOD AND HUNGER IN GRESHAM

By Janet Unruh, WENA Board Member

About five decades ago, I was recently divorced and living on my own. Although I had a college degree, I turned to "temp" work, and I was sent on interesting and challenging assignments in a variety of offices and factories. I lived on the minimum wage, which was just over three dollars per hour then. I had a studio apartment in a hip part of town—the rent was \$195 per month—and a car. I never worried about money. I was able to pay the rent and all the bills. Gas for the car was \$1.25 per gallon. I'd go to the ATM and get a ten-dollar bill for going out with friends. I didn't have credit cards. That's how affordable life was.

Today, **something as basic as food is becoming unaffordable** for many households. The overall inflation rate doesn't reflect what consumers pay at the grocery store, and shoppers are changing their habits in response[1]. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, grocery prices in the West increased 28.7% between August 2020 and August 2026[2]. In Oregon, the cost of basic necessities has risen faster than overall national inflation, according to United For ALICE[3] (described next).

ALICE VERSUS THE FEDERAL POVERTY LEVEL

According to the World Population Review website, Gresham has a poverty rate of 13.04% as of 2026[4]. This is calculated using the Federal Poverty Level (FPL), which is used to determine eligibility for various subsidies. ALICE, which stands for **Asset-Limited, Income-Constrained, Employed**, is a research initiative of United For ALICE. ALICE households have incomes above the FPL, but still cannot afford basic necessities.

The ALICE Threshold includes both households living in poverty and those earning above the poverty level but unable to afford basic necessities. Using 2024 ALICE data for six ZIP codes covering Gresham and nearby communities—97230, 97233, 97236, 97024, 97030, and 97080—the combined percentage of households that fall below the ALICE Threshold is 54%[5, 6]. **That's considerably worse than Gresham's 13.04% FPL.**

WHAT IS SNAP?

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) provides monthly grocery benefits to eligible low-income households through an EBT (Electronic Benefits Transfer) card. Nearly 15% of Oregonians receive SNAP benefits. SNAP does not cover total food costs for its recipients[7]. **More than 54% of SNAP participants are in families with children; more than 37% are in families that include older adults or people with disabilities; and more than 41% are in working families**[8] (categories overlap). Not only does SNAP benefit recipients, it also supports Oregon's economy. Each month, more than \$123 million in SNAP benefits are spent at grocery stores, farmers markets, and other food retailers in Oregon[9].

On July 4, 2025, President Donald Trump signed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act into law—enacting major cuts to federal food and health assistance programs. The law phases in its provisions on a staggered schedule over the next decade, reducing SNAP food assistance and other subsidies[10]. As of June 2026, 126,000 fewer Oregonians were receiving federal food assistance compared to the same time last year[11].

THE 80-HOUR WORK RULE

One of the biggest changes to SNAP is the expansion of work requirements, which apply to an increasing number of Oregonians. **Adults ages 18–64 without children under 14 in their household may now be subject to SNAP work requirements** unless exempt. They are categorized as able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs). They generally must complete 80 hours of work or approved activities, such as qualifying training or volunteer work, each month. Those who don't meet the requirement can receive only three "countable" months of SNAP during Oregon's current three-year period, January 2025 through December 2027. The countable months don't

need to be consecutive. After three countable months, benefits generally end unless the person meets the work requirement or qualifies for an exemption[12].

Exemptions may apply to people with qualifying health conditions, caregivers, certain students, and others. Veterans, people experiencing homelessness, and former foster youth no longer automatically exempt[13, 14]. The Oregon Department of Human Services (ODHS) **is encouraging people to contact the agency so staff can review their situation.**

Presumably, the intent of requiring work is to reduce dependence on subsidies. However, ABAWDs don't necessarily get a job if their SNAP benefits are cut. Research from the Urban Institute and the Hamilton Project shows that **SNAP work requirements don't boost employment** but instead cause participants to drop out of the program[15, 16].

WHAT IS OREGON DOING TO HELP?

In 2026, Oregon lawmakers approved funding, computer system upgrades, and additional staff to administer SNAP and handle increased caseloads. They also approved limited, temporary assistance for immigrants who lost federal benefits. The legislators did not, however, pass bills to support the School Meals For All Initiative, or fund investments in Oregon's Food Assistance Network[17, 18].

CAN FOOD BANKS MAKE UP THE DIFFERENCE?

Unfortunately, it looks unlikely, although they are making a heroic effort. Oregon Food Bank estimates that **SNAP provides nine meals for every one meal supplied by food banks**. According to Oregon Food Bank's 2026 State of Hunger Report, food bank visits across Oregon and Southwest Washington increased 51% over the past two years, reaching 2.9 million visits last year[19].

WHAT WE CAN DO NOW

If you're not already doing something to help, start now. There are plenty of ways to donate time, effort, food, and money. I set up a monthly donation to Thimbleberry Collaborative Farm (<https://thimbleberrycollaborativefarm.org/>) in Boring. It is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that runs a five-acre organic farm. This year, they donated 12,000 pounds of produce to food pantries in East Multnomah and Clackamas Counties, operated a free food stand, and provided meals[20]. See my article in this newsletter, Thimbleberry Collaborative Farm.

SnowCap Community Charities (<https://www.snowcap.org/>) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that provides food, clothing and other basics. They distribute prepacked food plus fresh and frozen food. SnowCap brings food to low-income schools and apartment complexes to reach children whose families are unable to get to their pantry. They also deliver food boxes and fresh produce to homebound seniors once a month[21].

East County Food Pantry (<https://eastcountyfoodpantry.org/>) provides food to people on Saturday mornings. They serve 3,000 people per month with a variety of produce, bakery goods, and other assorted grocery items. Food is supplied by Oregon Food Bank, Urban Gleaners, Clackamas Service Center, and others. The pantry is at Smith Memorial Presbyterian Church in Fairview. You can donate and sign up to volunteer on their website. They offer short shifts of one to four hours per week[22].

CONCLUSION

Now that we know more about the immediacy of food and hunger, we need to mobilize because the problem of hunger in Wilkes East and Gresham is on a worsening trajectory, with no resolution in sight. Ultimately, when the community pulls together, we gain friends and purpose, and all of us benefit. Let's work to restore goodwill toward others and build a sense of community solidarity.

See Endnotes online at: <https://www.wilkeseastna.org/node/3788> ■

Did you know? "Q" Is the only letter that doesn't appear in any U.S. state name.

We Need Each Other: The Power of Intergenerational Solidarity in Wilkes East

By G. Shawnta' Creech, WENA Contributor

When I moved to Portland in 2025, I came with a backpack, a purse, my two daughters, and a heart to serve the older adult community. I moved across the country because I fell in love with gerontology, the study of aging. I believe deeply that older adults deserve dignity, autonomy, and to be seen. But I also know my passion for aging isn't just about later life. It is about the entire life course. It's about making sure that whether you are 18 or 80, your life has purpose and your voice is heard.

I believe neighborhoods are where real change happens. They are where policy becomes personal. Right now, we are living through deeply uncertain times. The most powerful thing we can do is remember that we need each other. Not just the folks who look like us, live like us, or are the same age as us. We need the whole community.

Age Segregation Is a Lie

Our society likes to put people in age-based boxes. We put the youth in one space, working-age adults in another, and we push older adults to the margins. We treat aging like a problem to be solved, rather than a natural part of life.

But as a gerontologist, I can tell you that this segregation is a lie. When we separate generations, we lose out on the wisdom of our elders. We lose out on the energy and fresh perspective of our youth. We lose out on the middle-aged adults who know how to navigate the systems.

In a neighborhood as beautifully diverse as ours, we cannot afford to be separated. When a community is divided by age, it becomes easier to ignore the problems facing any one group. But when we are united, we are a force.

Why This Matters Right Now

We face rising costs, threats to public education, and a growing sense that the people at the top aren't listening to the people on the ground. In times like these, it's easy to retreat into our own homes and focus on our own survival.

But survival is a team sport. When the storm comes, we can't make it alone.

Look, chicken, flour, and oil are all great ingredients on their own. But you put them together right, and you've got fried chicken that is golden, delicious, and feeds a whole table. That's what a neighborhood is supposed to be. We need our youth; their fresh ideas and perspectives are valuable. We need our working-age adults; their input and insight matter. We need our older adults for more than history and wisdom; we need their resilience and power. You separate them, and you just have raw ingredients. But when you bring them together, you get a community that can actually feed and sustain itself.

What We Can Do Right Now in Wilkes East

You don't have to start a non-profit or run for office to make a difference. You just have to be a good neighbor. Here is how we can start building intergenerational power right here today:

1. The Simple Check-In. Isolation is one of the biggest health risks facing older adults. If you have an older neighbor, knock on their door. Ask them how they are doing. Offer to grab their mail or help them take out the trash. On the flip side, if you are an older adult, make an effort to smile and say hello to the young people in the neighborhood. A simple "good morning" bridges gaps.

2. Trade Skills and Share What You Got. Everyone has something to teach, and everyone has something to learn. Let's create spaces in Wilkes East where generations can exchange skills. Maybe a teenager can teach an older adult how to use Zoom or a smartphone. Maybe an older adult can teach a young parent how to bake a favorite recipe or how to fix a leaky faucet.

Imagine a neighborhood tool library where we share what we have instead of everyone trying to buy it alone.

3. Make Room for Everybody. When we host neighborhood events, we need to make sure they are accessible to everyone. Are there chairs for those who can't stand for long? Is there food that works for different dietary needs? Are there activities for children and activities for adults? When we plan, we should plan for the whole lifespan, not just the most vocal people in the room.

4. Show Up. If you see someone struggling in the neighborhood, don't look away. If a young person is having trouble, if an older adult needs help, if a family is struggling, be the neighbor who steps up. And when we have neighborhood meetings, show up. Your voice matters. Even if you feel like you don't know anything about city government, your lived experience is our most valuable tool.

The Power of a United Community

I have spent the last year fighting against powerful institutions that wanted to erase programs and silence voices. I have seen what happens when people refuse to give up. **And I have learned that the strongest weapon we have against a system that wants to divide us is community.**

When we connect generations, we build something that can't be broken. We are building a neighborhood that can weather any storm. We are building a legacy of care and community.

As my mother would say, "No man is an island." We aren't meant to do this life alone. We are meant to lean on each other and see one another.

Let's be that community here in Wilkes East. Let's take care of each other.

G. Shawnta' Creech is a WENA contributor. She is a proud mother, a gerontologist, and a fierce advocate for older adults and working families. ■

MEETING NOTICE

Gresham's new city manager, Teresa Carr, is scheduled to speak at the November 10th 2026 Neighborhood Coalition meeting. See the WENA article about her at: wilkeseastna.org/node/3782.

The meeting is at 7:00 pm via Zoom. Check the Neighborhood Coalition site at <https://www.greshamoregon.gov/Neighborhood-Coalition> for the agenda and more details.



Save the Date!

**Wilkes East Neighborhood
Fall 2026 Meeting
Monday, November 9th, 7PM
Moose Lodge • 16411 NE Halsey**

- Neighborhood Survey Results
- Vote New Wilkes East Bylaws
- Vote 2027 WENA Board Members
- WENA Bylaws Game
- Thimbleberry Collaborative Farm

See you there!

Are you signed up?
Nextdoor.com is the social networking service for neighbors to connect with each other. Sign-up today!

