

The Good Shepherd Center | Fostering Community & Sense of Place

Situated on a hilltop in Wallingford on a lot once surrounded by fruit orchards is the Historic Seattle-owned Good Shepherd Center (GSC). Today, the GSC is a thriving multi-purpose community center housing a senior center, six live/work units for artists, a rehearsal and performance space, various schools, local and international non-profit organizations, and several small businesses that all together attract an estimated 125,000 visitors annually.



Credit: Chris Robinson

Originally built in 1906 as the Home of the Good Shepherd, the Sisters of the Good Shepherd occupied the building and grounds for over 60 years, providing shelter, education, and training to young women and printing and laundry services to local industries such as The Great Northern and Northern Pacific Railroads. After the Home of the Good Shepherd closed in the '70s, the Wallingford community fought and defeated a proposal to turn the 11-acre site into a shopping center and the City of Seattle purchased the property in 1975. The building was then transferred to Historic Seattle for use as a community center. For over 40 years, Historic Seattle has since worked continuously to honor its past and further its legacy as a place full of vitality where community can thrive.



If you're interested in learning more about the GSC's history, join our popular [Behind the Garden Walls](#) tour on April 27. You'll walk the GSC grounds with Lead Gardener Tara Macdonald to learn about its 1900s origin, the community fight to preserve the GSC, and current efforts to maintain the historic gardens while embracing ecological awareness.



On the third floor of the GSC, a wing contains a cluster of small businesses that are all oriented toward helping others gain or maintain physical and emotional well-being. One of the practitioners in that wing is Lanie Riley, LICSW, LMP, who has offered her wellness services including counseling, therapy, and massage to individuals and families for over thirty years. Recently, in notifying Historic Seattle of her plans to retire, Lanie wrote, "It is with a certain feeling of regret that I leave the building officially. I've spent more waking hours in my studio than I have at home!"

Lanie's email went on to describe and highlight her numerous interactions that have contributed to forming a strong sense of community throughout the building and the grounds, which she describes as "a village."

"The grounds and garden have been a presence in my professional life. Child clients have felt welcomed here because there is a playground. Teen clients have preferred exploring the grounds while we talked, thereby avoiding eye contact while also discovering cool things! Bereavement clients sometimes found it easier to talk while strolling the lovely grounds. One summer day when I was seeing a bereavement client, who had lost both parents in a car accident, two swallows flew

gracefully into the wonderful, wide open window, circled the entire room three times on swift wings, then flew back out. Awe."

Lanie has donated to the Meridian Park playground and has "two tiles out there - one with names of my older son's kids, the other in memory of my younger son." She describes donating, trading, and providing paid services with other residents and organizations, attending events in the Chapel, and listening to musicians in the performance space through her 3rd floor ceiling while providing massage and counseling.



Lanie in practice space, aka her home away from home, at the Good Shepherd Center.

"I studied French at Alliance Française before a trip to France, streeetched out at The Yoga Center, had chiropractic adjustments from Trina Doerfloer, D.C., and borrowed books from the Jung Society. I've had lunches at the Senior Center and carried many a coffee back to my office."

"I have recently been sharing my space with other female therapists, all of us over 70...moving gently toward career endings together. Last but not least, at the Farmer's Market I found a cool band to play at my retirement party: Speakeasy Jazz Cats," Lanie added.

"Beyond saving a handsome building, Historic Seattle has provided a place where a sense of community thrives. As they say in New Orleans, I have passed a good time here!"