

## 2006–2016: Celebrating 10 years of creating access

by Sallie Neillie



**Sallie Neillie**  
Founder &  
Executive Director

**P**roject Access Northwest is gearing up for a year-long celebration of its 10th anniversary. Having been with this organization before it even officially launched as King County Project Access in 2006, I am gratified by how far we have come and how much we have grown. We have extended our program into three counties, created innovative new programs with community health care partners and helped more than 1400 volunteer providers annually provide much-needed care to patients in need.

I recently came across our first annual report—a simple, two-page typed summary of our accomplishments in 2006. While it pales in comparison to this year’s more elaborate report, I remember how proud we were of the 625 patients we served that year. It was a big number for us, and it proved we had a concept that could work. Today, we serve more than 5,500 patients annually!

In 2006, we also had just three employees focusing on serving patients in King County. Today, we have more than 20 employees serving patients in three counties.

We have evolved our programs in ways we never could have imagined when we started. The implementation of the Affordable Care Act in 2013 solved some problems but revealed many others, so we are constantly looking for new solutions.

Remarkably, many of our founding and collaborating partners listed in our 2006 report still

*Continued on page 2*

### HISTORICAL MILESTONES

- 2015** *Launched Primary Link Program  
Recognized as a health care innovator by Seattle Business magazine: Silver award for Achievement in Community Outreach*
- 2014** *Launched Premium Assistance Program  
Launched Minor & James Partnership*
- 2013** *Affordable Care Act implemented*
- 2012** *Expanded medical care coordination to Kitsap County  
Specialty dental program tops referrals  
Added dental services to Snohomish County*
- 2011** *Renamed Project Access Northwest  
Added dental services to King County*
- 2010** *Expanded medical care coordination to Snohomish County*
- 2009** *Invited to coordinate services at the Swedish Community Specialty Clinic (SCSC)*
- 2006** *King County Project Access launched*
- 2005** *Two pilot programs run at Pacific Medical Centers and Swedish–Cherry Hill campus.*
- 2004** *Local planning partners meet regularly to determine if a Project Access-type program would be viable in King County*
- 2002** *King County safety net providers convene to discuss challenge of accessing specialty services for low-income, uninsured and vulnerable patients.*



## Verdant Health Commission: A driving force in regional health care

**V**erdant Health Commission has generously awarded Project Access Northwest a second, **three-year, \$270,000 grant** to expand medical and dental services in south Snohomish County.

“We are so grateful for Verdant’s ongoing support,” says Executive Director Sallie Neillie. “When Swedish introduced us to Verdant in 2011, the benefits of a partnership were clear. Verdant’s mission — to improve the health and well-being of its community — aligns perfectly with ours.”

**George Kosovich**, Verdant’s assistant superintendent, explains why Verdant’s board supports Project Access Northwest: “The direct service piece is huge,” he says. “Patients get care they wouldn’t otherwise receive, and sometimes that is literally lifesaving.”

### An innovative approach to community wellness

A driving force in health care in Snohomish County, Verdant pursues its

mission in innovative ways, frequently partnering with other organizations that serve the same community.

When Verdant opened its 9,000-square-foot **Community Wellness Center** in Lynnwood earlier this year, it created a welcoming, vital community hub and invited like-minded organizations to host classes, workshops, speakers and meetings there. On any given day, a resident can walk in to Verdant and find Northsound 2-1-1 working out of a back office, while a class on healthy eating is held upstairs, next to a support group for those dealing with anxiety and depression. As long as the organizations and programs align with Verdant’s mission of community wellness, they are welcome in the beautiful new Verdant space.

According to George, it is important that Verdant’s programs resonate with the community and that its services reach beyond clinic walls.

### A rewarding collaboration

Collaborating with regional partners like Verdant, which believes so strongly in our work creating access to health care for all, makes what we do so rewarding from every perspective.



*The Verdant Community Wellness Center serves as a central hub for programs that promote health and well being.*

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*Continued from page 1*

play vitally important roles in our work today. These key partners have supported our work with creative ideas, financial and in-kind donations, and long-term collaboration and advocacy. They have made our work possible, and I feel a great sense of gratitude, especially for those who have been with us from the beginning.

**So, what’s next?** I couldn’t have predicted how our program would change over the last decade, so I won’t pretend I know what the next 10 years will bring. But I am confident that, guided by our board and mission, we’ll continue to improve health care access for those most in need.

### NOW AND THEN: Evolution of an organization

	NOW: 2015	THEN: 2006
<b>Name</b>	Project Access Northwest	King County Project Access
<b>Service area</b>	King, Kitsap and Snohomish counties. Premium Assistance Program offered statewide.	King County
<b>Highest demand</b>	Specialty dental	Orthopedics
<b>Staff members</b>	24	3
<b>Volunteer providers</b>	~1400	<100
<b>Patients served annually</b>	~5500	625

## WELCOME new staff members

### We're growing!

With our program's continued growth, we've been busy creating new positions, promoting staff and welcoming new team members. A couple of our latest hires have added a lot of energy, creativity and good humor to the office this summer.

#### Development Director Melissa Johnson

**Melissa Johnson** joined us in May to take on the role of development director. While she pursues her master's degree in nonprofit leadership at Seattle University through June 2016, this position allows her to put her education directly into practice.

"It's been thrilling to work with Sallie Neillie and learn about the innovative ways this organization has evolved and remains relevant in an ever-changing health care climate," says Melissa. "I'm constantly challenged to use the most current strategies and ideas to support our work."

As development director, Melissa is focusing on strengthening relationships with current partners and sponsors, while also increasing individual involvement and support.

"Project Access Northwest makes such a difference in people's lives. It's an honor to tell our story and share our mission and vision," she says. "We've served 26,000 patients since our founding, and I know that the care patients receive can be life-changing."

Melissa is married and has three sons.



(l to r) *Melissa Johnson and Lesa Welcker*

#### Administrative Assistant Lesa Welcker

One of Melissa's first actions as development director was to say yes to 12-year-old **Ella Welcker**, who chose health care access as her global awareness project for school and wanted to volunteer in our office. Ella's mom

**Les**a accompanied her every day and was inspired to volunteer as well. The two even collaborated to create a bake sale fundraiser.

When Lesa mentioned that she would be seeking a job in the coming year, Melissa snapped her up as our new administrative assistant.

"What I love about working here is that everyone really believes in what they are doing," says Lesa. "And I've quickly become equally passionate about our mission! It's exciting to be able to help people get the specialty care they need."

Lesa is married and has two daughters.



*Thanks, Ella, for your sweet fundraising effort!*

## MORE STAFF comings & goings

### Moving in

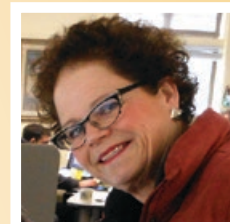
Welcome aboard Care Coordinator **Lauren Beliveau**, Dental Administrative Assistant **Joe Stover**, Snohomish County Dental Liaison **Deborah Murphy**, Care Coordinator **Soumya Choudhury** and Primary Link Coordinator **Armani' O'Neal**.

### Moving up

Congratulations to **Linh Le**, who has been promoted to Primary Link program manager, and **Adam Gilbert**, who has been promoted to care coordinator.

### Moving on

Best wishes to **Mary Zwerling**, RHIA, BSHI, our health information management and technology director, who has retired. We will miss her talent and spirit and wish for her a future filled with many grand adventures and happiness. Thank you, Mary!



## Project Access Northwest Board of Directors

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PROJECT ACCESS NORTHWEST PRESENTS

# CELEBRATING *our* PARTNERS

*"A Night of Gratitude" for health care heroes like you — September 16, 2015*

SPONSORED BY



We kicked off a campaign of appreciation earlier this month when we invited our volunteer providers, sponsors and partners to gather at the Sunset Club in Seattle for "A Night of Gratitude." Executive Director **Sallie Neillie** joined clients **Carlos Ortiz** (recipient of two knee replacement surgeries offered through Operation Walk) and **Adam Turner** (participant in our new Premium Assistance Program) in sharing stories with the audience. In the coming months, we plan to visit many more providers personally and express our thanks for all they do for our patients.

## GiveBIG: Thanks for being champions for access

### GiveBIG brought big results in 2015!

- We raised a total of **\$23,485**, topping the previous year's total by more than **\$7,000**.
- **76 donors** — including 13 new donors — helped us reach new heights.
- The average gift of **\$309** helped us provide much-needed specialty care services.
- With The Seattle Foundation's contribution from the stretch pool, our total grew to **\$25,461**.



*Thank you for your support!*

This newsletter is published by:



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**We invite your comments and questions.**  
Visit [www.projectaccessnw.org](http://www.projectaccessnw.org) to learn more.

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