

We return to the story of McReavy House and its resurrection...

The restoration of the house has been accomplished through the labor of a group of committed volunteers, the kind support of donors, and grants from the Mason County Historic Preservation Commission. It has been a HUGE undertaking, and thanks go out for the hands-on work of Larry and Mary De Forrest, Quentin Christie, Rick Endicott, Gilbert Leggett, Karen Pentony, John Sundsten, Kerry Myers, Margaret Buechel, Dave Kamin, Joe Fasio, me, and volunteers from Hood Canal Communication and Alderbrook. But most of all, Jayni Kamin.



It is Jayni I'm writing about today. She has been at the helm of this massive effort to bring McReavy House back to life as the chair of the nonprofit board since 2015. She will tell you, "It's because I love old houses. I always have."

But let's start at the beginning...

Jayni grew up in the Skokomish Valley, a fifth-generation member of the Hunter family. She has fond early memories of Union. Waterskiing behind her grandfather's oyster boat (I did the same). Walking to Ball's Grocery for penny candy and looking up at the ivy-covered McReavy Mansion and thinking the Addams family lived there. She went to high school in Shelton. She was the Mason County Rodeo Queen in 1973. Loved horses! Rode them all over the hills and by the river in the Valley. When she was fifteen, she and a friend rode from there to Deckerville, up Canyon River, to Camp Grisdale, across the Wynochee Dam, to Donkey Creek, and Copalis to Ocean Shores. Four days of hard riding, three nights of camping. WOW!

From 2002 to 2006, Jayni was a County Commissioner. When she became the chair, she committed to celebrating Mason County and helped launch the Historic Preservation Committee. McReavy House became the first residence listed as a historical site in the county. After it became a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, she joined the board.

About this time, she also became a member of Love in the Name of Christ, mobilizing local churches “to transform lives and communities in the name of Christ”. Twenty-five churches are now a part of the organization. But between this work and her other obligations, she found herself over-busy and left the McReavy House board. In 2015, at the behest of Terry Oliver, Jayni rejoined and became its chair.

It has been through her leadership, her love of old houses and desire to restore them, and the massive effort of a small but determined team, that the house has become what it is today. After ten years, the main rooms of the house are completely refurbished, the sagging foundation shored up, the leaky roof repaired, upgrades made to the electric system and security, the kitchen and main bathroom renovated, an energy-efficient heating system installed, windows replaced with period-style wood ones, and the property rid of scotch broom and much of the ivy twined around its trees. Think that’s it? No, the work will continue—finishing up interior and exterior projects, unveiling a new gallery room where they plan to showcase local and historical art, developing more parking space.

McReavy House shows off the result of that hard work with an annual summer picnic, a holiday party at Christmas time, and jam sessions featuring local musicians. It is also open for use by community groups that want to schedule meetings or hold events there.

Historical tours with local docents are offered on Saturdays and Sundays from Memorial Day through Labor Day.

The board is also working to improve online visibility, and most importantly, increase their membership to support long-term bigger projects to restore the original roofline and the box bay window that was removed in the 1970s. Another Union treasure we can help along the way!

Thanks from all of us in Union go to Jayni Kamin for her unflagging dedication. We applaud her love of old houses and their restoration—a boon to our community and a tribute to John McReavy. “My kids say I’m obsessed,” she says. In fact, she told me one of her ten grandchildren asked for a bedtime story. What did he ask for? A story about John McReavy.

Dawn Hanson Smart