



# Seattle Seafarers Center Annual Report

# 2024

**The mission of the Seattle Seafarers Center is to welcome and care for seafarers who visit Puget Sound.** This year, we have had the pleasure of meeting and serving seafarers from all over the world: The Philippines, India, China, Ukraine, Indonesia, Myanmar, Croatia, Papua New Guinea, Greece, and more. While 98% of seafarers worldwide are men, we have seen an increase in female seafarers this year, and have provided care packages especially made for women. We have served seafarers on cargo vessels, cruise ships, fishing vessels, and tugboats. We have a growing team of volunteers, which has allowed us to visit ships regularly in Seattle and Everett, and to begin expanding into the Port of Tacoma.

Seafarers worldwide are facing many challenges right now.

- Mental health is a priority issue we look out for on our ship visits, as seafarers often face loneliness, isolation, and depression, and many have suicidal thoughts. The long working hours (as many as 90 per week), difficult jobs, and extended time periods at sea (6-10 months) tend to exacerbate these issues.
- Shore leave is another key issue. While some seafarers have active US visas, many do not and are confined to the ship even while in port. Those with visas often find it difficult to find time to get off the ship and also to arrange for transportation, as taxis and Ubers can be very expensive.
- Connectivity is another challenge. The WiFi onboard tends to offer a spotty connection at best, and it can be difficult for seafarers to video call their families and young children to stay in touch during long contracts.

On the back side, you can read about the services we offered to seafarers this past year and how we have sought to alleviate some of these daily challenges seafarers are facing.



*Intern Margaret drives crew to the mall*

*Crew enjoy McDonald's at our Center*

*Rich delivers "ditty bag" care packages*

On rarer occasions this year, we also encountered serious welfare issues onboard ships.

- We supported the crew of a tugboat who were short on provisions of drinking water and food, and were overdue multiple months of wages. We also coordinated a medical care appointment for a crewmember who was experiencing an issue in need of quick resolution.
- We advocated for a course of care for a seafarer seriously injured at sea, who was being treated here in Seattle. We spoke with the insurance company, the shipping company agent, and the treating surgeon at the hospital in order to ensure he received the appropriate care and was not discharged early.
- We have been through training to address issues of harassment and have spoken to shipping companies regarding specific incidents. We advocated for a woman who was being harassed while on duty and spoke with her HR department to encourage an investigation which led to a better result for her.
- We have worked with local officials around foreign fishing crews who were essentially labor trafficked. This is an ongoing issue and we will continue our efforts to gain the appropriate support for these fishers.

**Consider supporting us in this important work!**

## Ship Visits

Our team of staff, interns, and volunteers tries to visit every ship that comes into the Port of Seattle. We have a steady volunteer team that visits ships in Everett, and starting in Fall 2024, we have been building up a volunteer team in Tacoma as well. Ship visits are an opportunity to check in on the crew's wellbeing, share stories, and talk about life aboard the ship.



### # Ship Visits

2022: 475

2023: 516

2024: 568

## Merchant Transportation

During the peak of the Covid-19 Pandemic, shore leave was heavily restricted. Since 2022, we have seen a steady increase in the number of seafarers allowed ashore and have also increased our capacity to provide rides. We often drive crew downtown for sightseeing or to a shopping mall. It is so important for crew to have time off their ships to unwind and shop for personal necessities, and through us to have an affordable means of transportation.

### # Merchant Crew Transported

2022: 312

2023: 830

2024: 1160

## Hospitality Center

Seafarers can visit our Center during the day to enjoy free WiFi, snacks, clothing and toiletries, use our chapel for prayer, or simply have a place to relax and play games off of their ship.

We received a grant this Fall from the ITF Seafarers' Trust to purchase a Foosball table and some new furniture to improve the hospitality we can offer seafarers here.



### # Visits to Center

2022: 13

2023: 185

2024: 287

## Cruise Ship Shuttle

This Summer was our busiest cruise season since pre-Covid! Thanks to the hard work of about a dozen volunteer drivers, we provided transportation to thousands of crewmembers from Pier 91 to downtown Seattle. The crew only get a few hours off their ship during the turnaround day, and so our shuttle is a much appreciated service for the crew.

### # Cruise Crew Transported

2022: 1491

2023: 6559

2024: 8637



## Ditty Bags and Clothing

Each holiday season, we bring "ditty bag" care packages on every ship we visit. This is one way we give thanks for these hardworking crews and help seafarers celebrate the holidays while away from home and family.

We also gifted many new sweatshirts and T-shirts to crews this year thanks to a donation from Rush Team Apparel.

### # Ditty Bags given

2022: 1426

2023: 1106

2024: 1351

### # Clothing items given

2022: 1504

2023: 776

2024: 3383

## Shopping Services

During the Pandemic, one of the major services we provided was shopping for crews without shore leave. We still offer this service, but it often looks different - instead of filling up Costco shopping carts to the brim with chocolate, vitamins, and Lysol spray, we are more often nowadays ordering items online that seafarers will bring home to their families as gifts. We still receive the occasional order from Costco, Domino's

Pizza, or Krispy Kreme, which we are always happy to oblige.

### # Shopping trips

2022: 107

2023: 26

2024: 47

## Welfare and Advocacy

We work closely with the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) to advocate for seafarers encountering welfare issues such as delayed payments, harassment, inadequate provisions, or lack of access to medical care. This year we have also met with the offices of both our State Senators to raise awareness about labor trafficking in the local fishing industry and the importance of the US ratifying the Maritime Labor Convention of 2006.

### # Welfare Cases Investigated

2022: 4

2023: 4

2024: 10

## Communication Resources

Often one of the first questions we are asked during a ship visit is, "Do you have SIM cards?"

While some shipping companies provide onboard WiFi through satellite connections, many limit the timing and bandwidth available, and most require that seafarers pay for this service. Given the length of contracts, being able to video call family is very important. We offer a variety of low-cost SIM cards on our ship visits to enable seafarers to connect with family back home, and have set up hundreds of these over the past year.

## Religious Services

During their contracts, seafarers are away from their faith communities and face a lack of access to places of worship. Upon captains' requests, our Center will facilitate religious services onboard ships, ranging from communion to ship blessings to memorial services. We also provide transportation to places of worship on the weekend.

### # Religious services facilitated

2022: 8

2023: 4

2024: 14

