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Twenty people
and partners
that inspired us
in 2020.



School's Out™
Washington

2020 Annual Report

20^{on}
2020

School's Out Washington supports the people and organizations who empower youth through expanded learning. Through advocacy, professional learning, and grants, we provide a foundation of support and expertise that enables and enriches the critical work of youth-serving organizations.

Dear Community,

Through all the challenges and loss that shaped 2020, I have never been more inspired by the those around me. From young people who found creative ways to connect and take action for equity and justice, to the tenacious child care and youth development staff who provided loving care and learning supports while schools were closed, then remote. And to all those who rose up and called out injustice and worked to

to highlight their essential contributions. Billie passed away in early 2021, and we will forever honor and appreciate her immense contributions to SOWA and to children and youth across Washington state.

And in her memory, I also want to honor the incredible people who are carrying on Billie's legacy today—our very own **SOWA staff**. In a year of



counter deep and structural inequity in this profound moment of change.

There is no shortage of heroes and stories to celebrate. And so here we endeavor to honor 20 of the people and partners that inspired us this past year. To get us started, I want to shine a light on two that are very close to my heart.

When I think of the critical role that school age child care staff played in supporting young people through this pandemic, I think of **Billie Young**. Billie founded School's Out Washington in 1987 when she worked for the City of Seattle's Department of Human Services. Always a strategist, Billie recognized a gap in supports and professional learning opportunities for school age child care programs and their staff. Billie's enthusiasm, passion, leadership, and vision are still part of SOWA.

She remained a committed champion throughout her lifetime, including serving as a founding board member when SOWA became its own 501(c)3 in 2012. If not for Billie, we would not be here to advocate for programs, provide coaching and training for their staff as they quickly adapted to immense challenges, and

uncertainty and change, this incredible team stayed focused on what mattered—advancing equity for young people and the youth programs that support them. Their dedication, creativity, and deep connection to community allowed us to rise to the occasion, including creating responsive resources and guidance for programs struggling to navigate immense challenges, and advocating for, securing, and administering millions of relief funds for youth development programs. Through it all, we have grown and cared for each other as a team.

Everything we do, and have accomplished, is motivated by the incredible community across the state we are here to support. We hope you are just as inspired as we are by the following people, organizations. and stories.



Sincerely,
Elizabeth Whitford, CEO

Advocacy Champions



3 Beth Monfils

Beth is the Education Services Manager for the Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic, which has multiple 21st Century Learning Centers. These federally funded programs are supported by SOWA and offer young people from underserved communities expanded learning opportunities.

Beth shares how and why she has stepped up to be an advocate for the youth and families in her programs.

■ Why is advocacy important to you and your organization?

There are many who are not invited to the table—who do not know they deserve a seat at the table. Being an advocate for youth who are often overlooked, hushed, and ignored has been an honor and a responsibility I don't take lightly.

■ What ways have you gotten involved in advocacy?

I have had the honor of accompanying youth to Olympia where they were able to share their experiences with legislators. I went to Washington D.C. with a student where she met with Senator Murray and others to share the positive impact 21st Community Learning Centers had on her life and helped shape her future. And I was chosen as the Washington State Afterschool Ambassador for Afterschool Alliance and was able to share the stories of some of the youth we serve with various legislators and media outlets.

I have been brought to tears listening to youth share their truth about life and how our staff have been their only safe place. I learn from youth with each encounter.

■ Is there a particular moment that really inspired you?

My favorite moments are seeing youth experience something new—whether it be seeing a forest for the first time, being accepted for who they are, improving their grades. Their eyes light up in a way that I cannot articulate. They stand a little taller and hold their head a little higher. It is inspiring and beautiful.

“Together we are dedicated to lead, with the courage to care, the determination to promote personal growth, and the compassion to champion the cause of those who have no voice.”

-Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic mission statement



4 Washington State Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos



5 Washington State Senator Lisa Wellman

“Rep. Santos and Sen. Wellman have led efforts to ensure all students have access to opportunities in and out of school that support academic and social-emotional growth. Through the pandemic, they championed legislation that requires school districts to utilize all the tools in their community to increase student well-being and to grow partnerships with community-based providers, including expanded learning programs.”

-David Beard, SOWA advocacy and policy director



Advocating for policies and funding for equitable, high quality expanded learning programs—like Proyecto MoLE—is one of SOWA's main bodies of work.

Youth Development Strategy Table

6 Advocacy has always been a crucial part of SOWA's work—championing funding and support for expanded learning opportunities across the state. Like so many things, that work shifted dramatically in the last year.

Legislators and state agency staff saw the immense value of child care and youth development providers. Organizations came together to share information, uplift one another, and ensure responsive supports were in place for youth and families most impacted by the pandemic.

Out of that momentum came the Youth Development Strategy Table—a unified voice for funding and supports for youth programs. Co-facilitated by SOWA, Youth Development Executives of King County, Communities in Schools of Washington, and Mentor Washington, this coalition is made up of advocacy groups, community-based organizations, and public agencies across the state of Washington.

James Miles, executive director of Mentor Washington, is especially eager to support smaller organizations, especially those with BIPOC leaders from the furthest corners of the state.

“To have a collective group of people and organizations working to support youth and youth programs on a state level is definitely a game changer. We are helping to maintain and uplift the cultural fabric of the region,” says Miles.

Jeannie Nist, associate director of Communities in Schools of Washington, adds, *“We are working collectively to elevate the entire field. Please join us—I look forward to collaborating with youth development partners in the upcoming year!”*

“Collaborative work results in collaborative wins and I’m excited to continue this momentum, trust, and work together for years to come,” says David Beard, policy and advocacy director of SOWA.

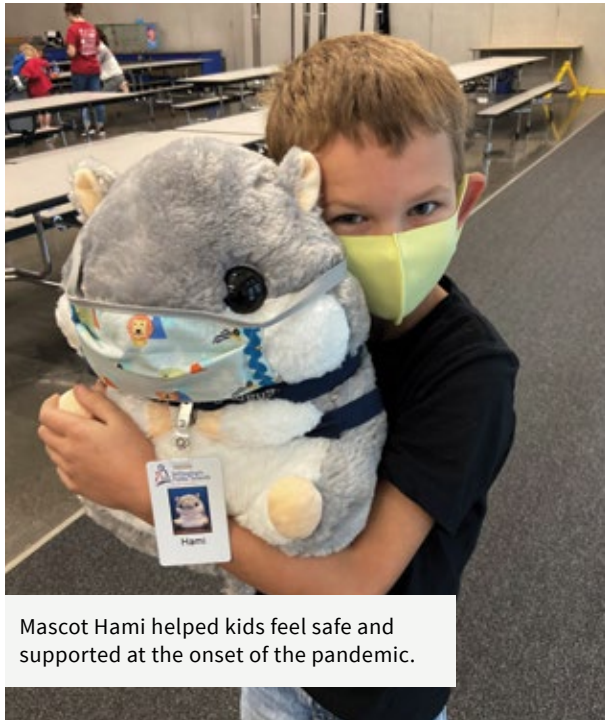
For more information or to join the YDST, visit ydstrategy.org.

2020 Washington State Advocacy Wins:

- \$10 million in COVID relief funding to youth development programs through the Washington State Department of Commerce
- \$8.1 million in funding to community-based organizations partnering to support youth in the pandemic through the Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
- CARES Act (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act) funding to bolster school age child care programs
- Strong partnership with Governor Inslee’s Office, legislators, and DCYF regarding information to and input from the field regarding pandemic-related strategies and decisions. This collaboration led to the most successful session ever held for expanded learning in 2021



Child Care—The New Frontline



Mascot Hami helped kids feel safe and supported at the onset of the pandemic.

7 Bellingham Public Schools and YMCA Partnership

Building Systems That Care—An “all hands-on deck” approach to child care in Whatcom County

Seven school districts and the Whatcom Central Emergency Command, with leadership from Bellingham Public Schools, worked together with child care providers to make sure there was safe, quality child care for essential workers in spring 2020, at the onset of the pandemic.

Two leaders in that efforts—Shannon Millican, YMCA after school and camp program director, and Kristi Dominguez, Bellingham Public Schools assistant superintendent—share why this collaboration was so vital for families and community

Shannon explains, “When the COVID pandemic arose and schools were forced to close, the Whatcom Family YMCA opened its doors to (the children of) essential

workers in our community. Because of our longstanding relationship with the Bellingham School District, we were able to secure school sites, food, and other support to be able to provide emergency care.”

“Our efforts to serve the community continued when schools were unable to return to in-person learning in September 2020. The Y collaborated with our district partners to secure adequate space and para-educator resources to support students’ remote learning.”

“Without these strong partnerships, our ability to provide such quality and resilient programs to the community would not have been possible.”

—Shannon Millican, YMCA after school and camp program director

Kristi continues, “Across the nation, COVID unveiled the critical role that our child care providers play in sustaining a community’s economic landscape and in providing wraparound supports for families.



Shannon Millican

“Early learning advocates have known for years the incredible impact that a thriving childcare workforce can have not only on a child’s life, but the health and well-being of a community.”

—Kristi Dominguez, Bellingham Public Schools assistant superintendent

Child care could no longer be seen as an optional resource...and (we adopted)... an ‘all hands on deck’ approach. As a coalition, we took a unified stance to not only think about the immediate needs, but to set a long-term goal that ensured that on the other side of COVID, as a county, we would have a thriving child care workforce for children and families to return to.

For that reason, we focused on moving from reactive systems of recovery to proactive strategies of support. This required intentional planning, thinking, and a willingness to be creative, centering the needs of students and families.”



Kristi Dominguez

“We knew that by focusing our resources and efforts in building systems that care for and educate our children while providing economic stability, we could ensure the creation of a thriving childcare infrastructure and workforce for years ahead.”



Child Care—The New Frontline Cont.

8 Launch

Creating a new ecosystem of support for children and families

In their own words, Launch *“leads the charge to brilliant outcomes for the children of our community by ensuring equitable access to the highest quality learning and care.”*

Their collaboration with Seattle Public Schools allows staff to communicate and partner with teachers, building on and complementing school-day learning. When COVID hit, they quickly shifted their before- and afterschool programming to full-day care, prioritizing and offering free care to essential workers and medical staff. Their services also expanded to supporting foster youth with a safe space to learn and grow.

Launch continues to facilitate remote learning for kindergarteners to fifth graders in Seattle Public Schools. They are mastering the skills of coordinating different school schedules with their program offerings. Launch’s programming focuses on education, social, and emotional skills as well as providing movement opportunities for “kids to just be kids.”

“I was in awe of how fast we pivoted and the dedication to the community,” said Isis Fernandez, expanded learning opportunities director with Launch.

Fernandez has made it her mission to support her staff with professional development and healing-centered care. She took the time to check in on each site in person, quarantining for two weeks, and repeating the process throughout 2020. She thinks it’s incredibly important to normalize mental wellness in the professional field and support opportunities to reflect together online.

Fernandez describes the Launch staff as *“resilient, flexible, and adaptive. They are all willing to be there for the kids.”*

“A lot of things were going on, but at the forefront was safety and social-emotional support for staff and kids,” said April Miller, youth program quality coach with SOWA.

Isis Fernandez (top, center) on a teacher-facilitated Zoom class with Launch kids—what she calls “the most perfect portrayal of our new virtual ecosystem.”



Reimagining Together



9 Dr. Megan Ming Francis

In a year truly like no other, SOWA’s annual Bridge Conference was reimagined and reinvented into a virtual space that held strong to the values of Equity, Belonging, Leadership, Change, Nourishing, Innovation, and Community.

Dr. Megan Ming Francis, an Associate Professor at the University of Washington who specializes in the study of American politics, race, social movements, and the development of constitutional law, embodied these values in her opening keynote address at the all-virtual Bridge Conference last year.

In thinking about the theme—The Seeds We Sow—Dr. Francis shares, *“I think this is an exciting moment to think about the type of future we want and the choices we need to make today to ensure that (the) future happens. It is a time in which young people, educators, and communities are aware of the immense power they have to disrupt and to reshape existing systems. And so, I don’t think there is any better time to think about growth and intentionality than the present moment.”*

Her address moved and inspired the more than 400 attendees.

“(Dr. Francis’) opening keynote continues to resonate so deeply for me. It truly was the perfect start for this year’s conference, grounding us in a sense of history and charge to push the boundaries of our imaginations as we work alongside young people.”

—Elizabeth Whitford, SOWA CEO

“So grateful that (Dr. Francis) set the tone of this conference as something radical, beyond borders, seeing the impossible... I needed something to remind me that I’m working towards liberation/ decolonization.”

—Participant

Reimagining Together Cont.

10 Nuestras Raíces

Exploring the Complexity of Latinx Identities and Experiences

The Nuestras Raíces session at SOWA's 2020 virtual Bridge Conference invited attendees to hear a collection of unfiltered, raw, and authentic multilingual stories and voices around the complexities of carrying the Latinx identity in the U.S.

With vulnerability and honesty, youth workers and expanded learning professionals told their stories and how they work to decolonize spaces, heal, and support young people.

Speakers Jocelyn Reyes Chávez, Mariela Rosas, and Maria Pia Johnson Barreto share their thoughts about the session.

■ What was your takeaway from the Nuestras Raíces?

Jocelyn: Sense of community. We're sharing more than just a label. It's about the shared experiences we all have.

Maria Pia: Bringing people together and identifying a need for space. Creating room for fearlessness. It was

about us making a statement. We don't want to be translated and we want to be authentic.

Mariela: People wanted to hear our stories. Know that we are doing our part, educating...our communities. We were doing our part.

■ What do you want people to remember about the event?

Jocelyn: It's important to speak our truth even when it's uncomfortable.

Maria Pia: All different stories and all are powerful. The importance of creating spaces is fundamental to our work and for the youth to see.

Mariela: Being Latinx doesn't mean we all come from the same background. We are all different—customs, cultures, language, and all are rich. We are all a culture and we all support each other.

■ One sentence that comes to mind when you think of the event?

Jocelyn: Poder del corazon (power of the heart).

Maria Pia: Rompiendo esquemas y moldes (breaking schemes and molds).

Mariela: A storyteller is a door open to the world.



Ryan helps unload food for the community food pantry.

11 Ryan Quigtar

Building capacity for the future

As a young leader of color, sometimes the best thing you can be given is an unforged path. No preconceived expectations, just the opportunity to create something you know is needed and make a path for others like you to follow.

For Ryan Quigtar, executive director of the Renton Innovation Zone Partnership (RIZP) since 2018, that path has been hopeful, difficult, and heartfelt.

RIZP is a community partnership designed to promote racial equity and healthy learning for the 5,000 children living in the Renton Innovation Zone—41 percent of whom live in households where English is not the primary language.

As Ryan explains, “The idea behind the RIZP was to have a backbone organization make space for all the direct service providers that work with youth and families after the school bell.” Together with his small and deeply invested team, they have taken what was once a far-reaching community dream and turned it into a vital resource in a historically overlooked area.

Ryan talks with SOWA King County Program Manager Janell Jordan about his experience and dreams for his community.

■ Why was being part of RIZP important to you?

The opportunity to come back to my neighborhood in this leadership role at a young age. I grew up in Skyway and went to the same schools. Being unincorporated, we don't have a whole lot of infrastructures and systems in place.

■ How did RIZP respond to the COVID pandemic?

School closed on a Thursday. That following Tuesday, we had our Basic Needs Action Team meeting, thank goodness, because that meeting was foundational for all our responses. From that meeting, we coordinated a partnership with Northwest Harvest to start our food pantry on Saturdays. Communities in Schools in Renton managed (a request form) and they worked with over 500 families. From there we just took off. It's really a testament to the partnership because everyone stepped up.

■ What has this experience taught you?

The pandemic has highlighted so many broken systems and gaps. One of the things that we've helped to grow is food security. We started our first pantry in March 2020 and made do with what we had. We added a cold food storage pod for more complete food boxes. That prompted us to think about how we make it sustainable and reliable for people to get access to healthy food every Saturday.

■ What gives you hope?

I call it a social justice tidal wave. More people have found a voice and are pushed to speak up and make changes. (That's) why we are doing this work. We stay grounded in that.

■ What does it mean to you to be a leader?

The team holds me accountable. Shout out to the team! Everyone that's on the team has a connection to the area we work in. Our decisions come from lived experience.

I tell this to people all the time that everything we're doing is new and we get to make the rules. No one was doing STEM nights, or drive-through events, or consistent pop-up basic need events. That freedom is amazing to feel.



SOWA and the Washington Department of Commerce worked together to disperse nearly \$10 million in COVID-relief funding to expanded learning programs across the state, focusing on grassroots organizations that support BIPOC youth and youth in poverty.

12 Washington Youth Development Nonprofit Relief Fund

In a few short months at the end of 2020, SOWA dispersed nearly \$10 million to 441 youth development organizations across the state with a process designed to break down barriers to funding for grassroots organizations that directly support BIPOC youth and youth in poverty.

The COVID-19 outbreak, extended school closures, and social distancing have deepened inequities and hardships for young people across Washington. In response, youth development programs quickly adapted their services to provide supports for youth and families to whom they are deeply connected. Expanded or adapted offerings have included emergency childcare, social-emotional supports, academic mentoring, virtual programming, and basic needs supports. For many, these organizations have been a sustaining lifeline.

By providing access to essential services and pivoting to offer expanded learning opportunities online, they have helped ensure that children and young people remain safe, engaged, and supported.

The Fund, which represents the first Washington state investment in the youth development sector at large, was made possible by CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act) funding administered by the Washington State Department of Commerce, which chose to work with School's Out Washington because of our field expertise, equity lens, grant-making experience, and capacity to lead a complex process on an unusually fast timeline. For a full list of grantees, visit youthdevrelief.schoolsoutwashington.org.

“Thank you for also letting this be a grant process that almost anyone could apply for based on technical skills. As a Black leader, too often I am asked to apply for a grant and end up feeling inadequate and overwhelmed. Thank you for this opportunity and having an equitable grant.”

-Baionne Coleman,
Rainier Valley Leadership Academy

Relief Fund Impact #s

- 441 programs funded
- \$9.8 million awarded
- 2/3 of awardees had annual budgets of less than \$500,000
- 84% of awardees focus on BIPOC youth
- 86% of awardees focus on youth in poverty
- Grants ranged from \$10,000-\$50,000
- Grant application was translated into 13 languages
- 84% of grant reviewers reported lived experiences/identities of the priority youth populations

“Washington’s workers need to know their children and youth are learning and growing in safe and supportive environments. Never has this been more true than during the pandemic. Youth development and expanded learning programs served as vital academic, social-emotional, and basic need resources across the state.

The Department of Commerce welcomed the partnership with School’s Out Washington to create the Youth Development Non-Profit Relief Fund. This program helped ensure programs could stay open and serve students through what continues to be an incredibly challenging time for Washington’s families and youth.”

-Dr. Lisa Brown, Director,
Washington State Department of Commerce

Responsiveness of Expanded Learning Programs

13 Boys & Girls Club of Snohomish County

When caring about your community is a lifestyle

Washington Youth Development Nonprofit Relief Fund Grantee Spotlight

For 75 years, the Boys & Girls Club of Snohomish County (BGSC) has been an open door for young people in many communities. With 25 locations across the region, their participants are diverse, including many Latinx, Native American, and rurally located youth.

Their mission “to enable all young people, especially those who need us most, to reach their full potential as productive, caring, responsible citizens” drives their day-to-day work. When kids start coming to any BGSC location, they are encouraged to try everything, be bold, and be a good friend.



Children at the Boys & Girls Club of Snohomish County are given academic and emotional support, meals, and a safe place to spend their day.

“I’ve been here 17 years and have seen kids grow into responsible adults,” said Chief Operating Officer Marci Volmer. “I didn’t expect working here to be as impactful as it has been in my own life... I always tell new staff to be sure their whole family is on board because it becomes a lifestyle.”

BGSC’s commitment to being a safe space was challenged during the pandemic but quickly blossomed into full-day offerings and mental health support.

“Our staff had to change overnight from before- and afterschool recreation programming to a virtual learning lab,” said Volmer.

Their services now include equitable access to laptops and Wi-Fi, meals, and emotional support staff to guide youth through stress and other big emotions that are so pervasive during the pandemic. The goal is to keep students in a routine and create a somewhat “normal day.” Staff are trained to identify the challenges kids are experiencing, communicate with mental health support staff, and then cultivate relationships to help youth navigate their feelings.

“Our message in these uncertain times is that we’ve been here, and we will stay here. No doors closing here,” said Volmer.

14 Seattle CARES

Creating and becoming superheroes

Washington Youth Development Nonprofit Relief Fund Grantee Spotlight

Seattle CARES is more than mentoring. The organization invests not only in the youth they work with, but also their families. Their mission is to secure and transform the lives of Black children by inspiring, recruiting, and mobilizing masses of caring Black men and women to mentor and nourish them.

The pandemic highlighted an increasing need for wraparound support—and quickly transforming programs to virtual. Seattle CARES distributed laptops, hot spots, food, and other basic necessities for families who needed it—made possible with the support of local partnerships.

Donald Cameron, Seattle CARES executive director, said, “I’ve never seen more collaboration between nonprofits like I have in 2020. Whatever ego that might have been there was pushed aside to support families.”

Seattle CARES’ shift to virtual learning was an opportunity to get creative with their programming. The Rising program used an innovative superhero curriculum to engage the students. Each student was asked to create a superhero in their own image and then, in groups, come up with an original story.



Seattle CARES superhero curriculum helped young people creatively express their fears, whether about COVID or police violence.

A group of nationally established comic book artists and writers volunteered to help the students bring the stories to life. The discussions that followed encouraged youth to deal with their fears and concerns—whether it was the COVID-19 pandemic or police violence. The result was a series of short stories that were presented at a virtual event to parents, teachers, and principals at both schools.

When asked what’s the most important thing he wants people to know about Seattle CARES, Cameron’s heartfelt response was, “We help people. We care and we want to make a difference.”

15 Altera

Growing in rural Central Washington

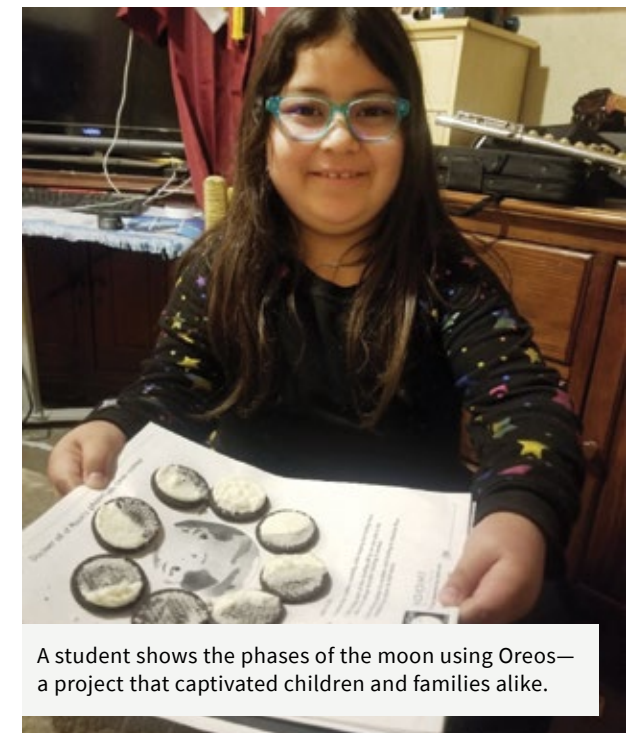
Altera, an educational nonprofit partnering with central Washington rural school districts, many speaking Spanish as their home language, saw firsthand how devastating the COVID pandemic could be for their communities.

Two of their programs in the small rural communities of Highland/Warden and Tonasket/Oroville serve families with little internet access or technology. They knew—as the experts were warning—that their students were not set up for success.

Staff quickly changed their program model from direct student service to in-home family-supported enrichment. They repurposed their transportation budget and bought books in both Spanish and English with learning activities focused on ‘growing things’ and ‘the night sky’—two themes that could engage whole families to learn together.

“There are great assets for learning in our families’ homes; what they lacked were reading resources and a bit of guidance. Parents and students spoke of reading books, planting seeds, and watching the movement of the moon as a highlight of their time together. We believe there (were) more hours spent learning beyond school-guided instructional time because our families had more in-home resources.”

—Dr. Barbara Peterson, Altera Executive Director



A student shows the phases of the moon using Oreos—a project that captivated children and families alike.

Altera’s programs receive funding from the federal 21st Century Community Learning Center program and coaching, training, and continuous quality improvement support from SOWA..

Responsiveness of Expanded Learning Programs Cont.

16 Hawk Foundation for Research and Education in African Culture

Unveiling overlooked history to empower and educate

Washington Youth Development Nonprofit Relief Fund Grantee Spotlight

Based in Thurston County, The Hawk Foundation for Research and Education in African Culture “dedicates itself to the promotion of education, holistic health, and trauma healing in the African American community.” Its Wisdom of the Drum program brings youth and their families together to learn more about African drumming, African American history, and multicultural arts.

The Hawk Foundation also partners with schools across the Puget Sound to develop a curriculum that highlights African American culture and history. The

goal of their work is to contribute to ongoing efforts to dismantle racism within systems and provide support for change.

“Various aspects of African American history were not taught or not intentionally taught to uphold a hierarchy. Students learn about slavery, but not about the times when people fought back. Youth of all backgrounds will come up to me and say, ‘wow, I never learned that in history,’” said Executive Director Javoen Byrd.

Their goal is to empower all youth and educators, from all backgrounds, to seek out more information about African American history. Byrd operates from the viewpoint of always asking questions and staying curious.

The foundation is currently working on a documentary that sheds a light on some lesser-known U.S. history. Members of the foundation will be traveling to Oklahoma to visit the Seminole Nation Museum and dive into their research for a documentary about Black Seminoles and their history. Byrd is especially excited to bring John Horse to the forefront and share his story with youth and educators alike.

The Hawk Foundation’s programs seek to teach young people and their families about often untold African American history, arts, and culture.



“Since I was young, I loved African American history and I would study on my own. I want to share and empower through education for the benefit of both students and society,” said Javeon Byrd, Hawk Foundation Executive Director

17 Cup of Cool Water

A journey of compassion and reconciliation

Washington Youth Development Nonprofit Relief Fund Grantee Spotlight

Cup of Cool Water—a 25-year-old nonprofit ministry in downtown Spokane—“walks alongside youth who are homeless on their journey of reconciliation with themselves, God, and society.”



Cool Water Painters—created at the request of youth—provides holistic job-training opportunities, life skills, and support in exiting street life.

The organization operates from the standpoint of “come as you are,” welcoming young people ages 12-24 into a supportive community. They emphasize that their work is not dependent on a specific faith, but exists to support youth in loving themselves, continuing to grow, and finding and embracing the spiritual element of life.

“More than anything they need a caring community to surround them and opportunity—even if it’s just to figure out who they are,” said Executive Director Randy Waltman.

Cup of Cool Water offers a place for youth to eat, shower, and do laundry, as well as other opportunities for community service and job training. Their job program teaches skills through painting buildings and houses in the community with the goal of steady employment. With Cup of Cool Water staff supporting them every step of the way, graduates choose their next move into jobs like manufacturing, food service, and even music production.

Waltman clarified, *“We have a job training program because the youth wanted a job training program. This is not playing into the idea of ‘they need to get a job.’ Youth inform what we offer.”*

Another important aspect of the organization’s work is its model of reconciliation. Youth will not be turned away, but if for any reason they are asked to leave then it is offered as an opportunity for a conversation. They are always welcome to come back and talk to staff about what might have happened. The door is never closed. The same is true for youth working with and for the community.

Waltman’s personal experience with homelessness as a young man drives him to ensure that young people have support and role models. He sees Cup of Cool Water as a community-led effort and hopes they one day “work themselves out of a job.”

“I want to be a difference-maker. Not in a savior way... but a person of service.”

“We measure our impact on one life at a time... People want data and numbers, which is important, but we like to measure by changed lives. Not in the way we may think is best, but what the youth are striving for,” said Randy Waltman, Cup of Cool Water Executive Director

Best Starts for Kids

Innovating for Community

King County's Best Starts for Kids initiative is anchored in the belief that for youth to be happy, healthy, safe, and thriving, all members of our community must be supported. From perinatal services to family homelessness prevention work to programs for college- and career-age young adults—the multi-year initiative has strengthened the ecosystem of support in King County.



Two children from the Best Starts for Kids' Northgate Collaborative.

The pandemic threw youth programs' vital role within communities into sharp relief. Beyond their hallmark work of providing young people with out-of-school-time enrichment, Best Starts Out-of-School Time grantees shifted quickly to provide services like basic needs distribution, school day remote learning support, and public health engagement.

The “*whole child, whole community*” philosophy of the Best Starts initiative meant that organizations had both the funding to provide these services and the flexibility to expand their work to meet the emerging needs of youth and families.

18 Life Enrichment Group quickly and creatively responded when schools went virtual and their youth needed more support—academically and emotionally. They moved their programs online and focused on career development, recognizing the technical skills used to participate in remote learning could translate into future job skills. They convened a recurring family support group to create space for parents and guardians to talk through the hardships associated with remote learning. And they helped families advocate for their students with school staff and funded at-home learning equipment, such as chairs, lamps, and power strips, when the living room became the classroom.

“We’re really making sure that they’re receiving those social and emotional supports; that they know that they can come to a culturally relevant environment and feel safe. That’s really important now because there’s so many things out there that are unknown and scary for our kids.”

—Monika Mathews, Life Enrichment Group executive director

19 The Northgate Collaborative, a Place-Based Partnership between Seattle Parks and Recreation and STEMPaths Innovation Network (SPIN), made sure their families had the resources needed to support their children during school closures. SPIN loaned their entire stock of laptops and tablets to families before Seattle Public Schools had been able to secure at-home equipment for students. And they developed at-home STEM activities like solar ovens to help kids get STEM learning while spending time away from screens. Seattle Parks and Recreation grew



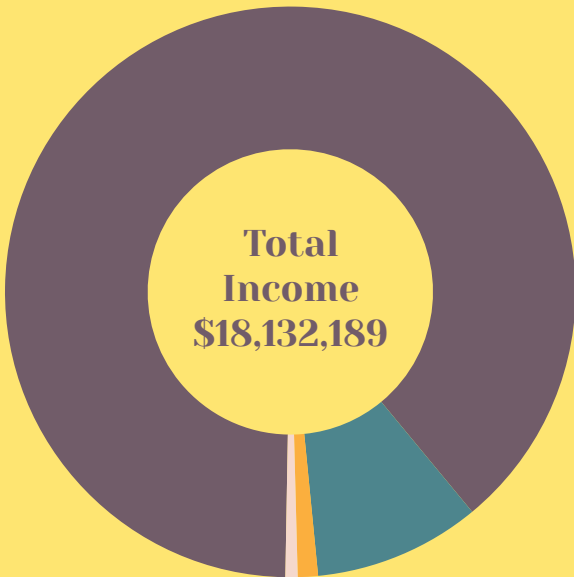
Children and youth from the Woodridge Park housing community send off the Arts Corps band after music and dancing.

their relationship with two parent leaders into a formal partnership, with the moms coordinating the drop-off and distribution of learning materials and basic needs supplies within their respective neighborhoods.

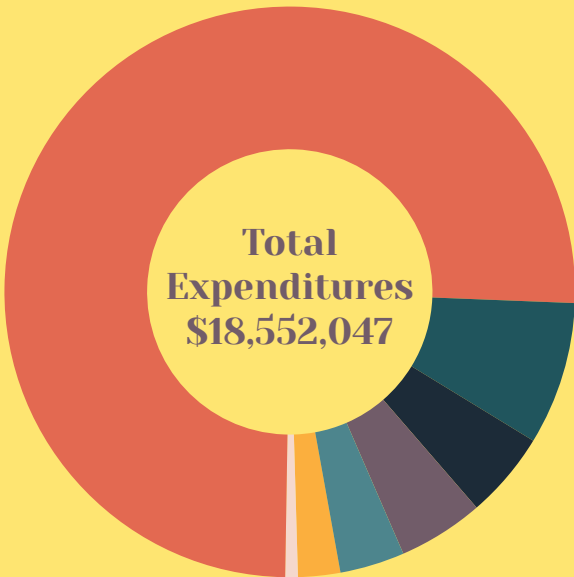
20 Arts Corps brings joy and creativity to young people's doorstep—literally. They developed at-home art kits which provided youth with culturally relevant project materials and instructions (including resources to help parents and guardians get involved) and held a drive-through party with a live band that allowed for socially-distant balcony dancing at the Alcove, Arbor Heights, Windsor Heights, and Woodridge housing communities.

School's Out Washington leads King County's Best Starts for Kids Quality Out-of-School Time initiative, which funds and supports organizations that provide access to consistent, high-quality, and culturally relevant summer and afterschool programming to underserved communities and geographies.

2020 Financials



Government Grants 89%
Foundation Grants 9%
Earned Income 1%
Individual & Corporations 1%



Programs
Grants to Other Organizations 78%
Quality & Professional Learning 8%
Fiscally Sponsored Organizations 5%
Grants Administration 5%
Advocacy & System Building 4%
Other
General Administration 2%
Fundraising 1%

SOWA's Impact

1,363 coaching hours	2,416 adults trained
505 training hours	82,949 youth reached
692 programs supported	\$13,982,000 granted



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