

# REFLECTING ON COMMUNITY RESILIENCE AND RENEWAL



2022

**WHATCOM**  
community  
FOUNDATION







## This is a watershed moment for our community.

Like so many others over the last two years, the Whatcom Community Foundation has radically shifted our efforts in response to a global pandemic and then, on its heels, a disastrous local flood. In addition to our typical work across the many facets of community development, we've been partnering throughout the county to address emergent needs and challenges.

What hasn't changed is our vision: a community where every single person who lives in Whatcom County can thrive. And after more than two long years in crisis that laid bare our individual and collective vulnerabilities, it's painfully clear what stands in the way of making that ideal real.

We know we are not alone in our vision. We've witnessed heroic work, and we know there is more to do in every corner of our community. We also know that when we solve for the steepest barriers and the most complex lives in our community, life gets better for everyone.

*On the cover: Bellingham resident Chris Blakely, and his daughter Hannah Blakely, run trails throughout Alabama Hill and Whatcom Creek.*

*Left: The Fishermen's Pavilion in Zuanich Point Park gives local fishers a sheltered place to work in the off season, and is available for public use during the summer.*







## As we emerge into new ways of being, let's rethink what is possible.

Let's build on the growing countywide collaboration and great work done during the last two-plus years. Let's set aside assumptions about what we can or can't do, about what our neighbors do or don't think. Let's assume instead that together, we can build a community that works for everyone.

Because we can.

< A registered nurse volunteers her time and services at the Catherine Mahaffey East Whatcom Wellness Fair in Kendall, May 2022.

In fact, all together since the start of the 2020 fiscal year, the Community Foundation has granted more than **\$18 million dollars** to support community and individual prosperity strengthening efforts.

**Even in uncertainty, we witnessed the community show up like never before.**

Since March 1, 2020, through Whatcom Community Foundation's *Resilience Fund*, supporting programs and community fundraising efforts, an extraordinary **\$5,581,871 million** dollars has been put to work to support the community's recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and 2021 flooding.







## While the emergencies may be behind us, the urgency is not.

One in five of your neighbors is food insecure. Nearly half of local residents who work still cannot afford housing, childcare, healthcare, transportation, and food. Our kids need care and support and every chance to fulfill their dreams. Our community must prepare for the next disaster, protect our environment and foster economic opportunity for all.

< Oliver Robinson tends to Maple Alley Inn's bountiful raised beds at the Faith Community Garden, Bellingham.







## Together, we can address Whatcom County's most pressing needs.

We engage where we think we can add the most value. Right now, that means focusing on affordable housing, the care of children from "birth to bright future," food security, disaster preparedness and recovery, and equity-driven economic development.

< Antonio Diaz opened Cafe Rumba in downtown Bellingham in 2012, where he and his wife also host salsa dancing after hours.







## Success means building bridges to the education, relationships and money that all people need to flourish.

Every child's chance to thrive grows with education that starts in early childhood and ends beyond high school. Mentors, role models and connectors are critical at all ages, while the financial ability to make opportunities, or take advantage of them, is often the difference between survival and prosperity. Building universal access to these essentials is the core of our work.

< Teachers at the Seedlings  
Early Learning Center,  
left to right: Emma Langley,  
Karva Coward and  
Lina Moreno-Crespo.





Like Whatcom County's  
very own Swiss Army knife,  
the Community Foundation  
is here to help with  
whatever tool makes  
the most sense.

## Our tools come in three categories:

those that help strengthen our community backbone, those that either draw or deploy resources, or ways to shape policies and practices.

### 1. Strengthen the Community Backbone

The Community Foundation invests in structures, system change, community learning and connections, and skill-building to cultivate neighborliness and increase community resilience.

#### Food Security Task Force

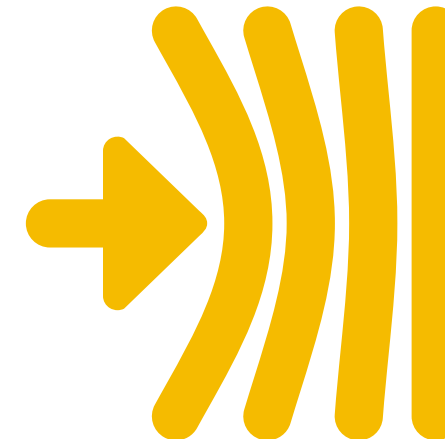
We convened the Food Security Task Force in 2020 at the request of Whatcom Unified Command. The group includes all food banks and public schools countywide as well as several other food-related organizations and meets regularly to address food security factors from production to policy.

#### Project Neighborly

Launched on Election Day in 2016, the Project Neighborly grant program is for people who have great ideas about how we can become better neighbors by cultivating curiosity and generosity of spirit.

#### Resilience Fund

Local philanthropic dollars are the fastest and most flexible funds in a disaster. The Community Foundation maintains a fund that can be activated swiftly to meet community needs.





## 2. Draw & Deploy Resources

The Community Foundation launches projects and programs, makes impact investments and grants, and gives scholarships in partnership with donors and many other partners.

### Grantmaking

Thanks to donor generosity, we've invested more than \$55 million in Whatcom County since the Whatcom Community Foundation was established in 1996.

### Impact Investments

Community Foundation impact investments are designed to generate social, environmental, economic and other community benefits. Investments include a range of projects: The Millworks, workforce housing development, local food production and refugee assistance.

### Scholarships

Each year, more than 100 local students benefit from Community Foundation scholarship funds. Whatcom Dollars for Scholars is supported by local donors and gives students the opportunity to also be matched with other regional and national opportunities.

### The Millworks

*The county's first Community Benefit development, the Millworks on Bellingham's waterfront (in partnership with Mercy Housing NW, the Port of Bellingham and many others), confronts our community's most critical challenges: workforce housing, affordable childcare, food security, and economic development, all driven and informed by a commitment to equity.*



**Guided by community aspirations and informed by community plans, the Community Foundation engages in eight key areas:**

*affordable housing, community connection, education, food and agriculture, arts and culture, economic development, environment, and health and wellbeing*

## 3. Shape Policies & Practices

The Community Foundation creates conditions for inclusive prosperity through research, advocacy and adaptation.

### Internal flexibility

In response to the intense need, we increased spending rates on our endowments during the pandemic and simplified the grant application and reporting requirements to get money to organizations and the people they serve as quickly as possible.

### Community Health in Planning

We're championing the integration of population health into all types of community planning, e.g. the Community Economic Development Strategy (CEDS) now includes references to the Community Health Assessment and Health Improvement Plan. It's all connected.

### 2020 Census

The Whatcom Center for Philanthropy\* supported the Whatcom Complete Count Committee (WCCC), established in 2019 by tribal and local governments and other community leaders to help orchestrate a fair and complete count in the 2020 Census and beyond, ensuring that local communities have access to critical funding and other resources as well as the information needed to make the best decisions about private and public investments that will last for generations.

### Employee Ownership

Employee-owned companies have proven positive effects on business stability, productivity and job creation, along with better pay, benefits, and retirement savings and deeper civic participation. The Community Foundation is working to ensure that those who are interested in employee ownership have access to the resources they need along the way.

*\*Chuckanut Health Foundation, United Way of Whatcom County and Whatcom Community Foundation.*





# Connection lies at the heart of the Community Foundation's work.

We connect partners to action, organizations to grants, donors to possibilities, ideas to investments, neighbors to neighbors.



- < Far left: Elaine Woods volunteers at Maple Alley Inn's plot at Faith Community Garden.
- < Middle left: Raul Ocasio and his daughter Rita.
- < Left: Local optometrist professionals help attendees get properly fitted with new prescriptions at the Catherine Mahaffey East Whatcom Wellness Fair.
- ^ Above: Attendees get free health information at the Catherine Mahaffey East Whatcom Wellness Fair.
- > Whatcom Smart Trips employee Michelle Grandy takes a break from teaching kids how to safely ride a bike at the Catherine Mahaffey East Whatcom Wellness Fair.

We might be championing a policy or bringing people together one day, making an impact investment the next and partnering after that. Sometimes we wear all those hats in one day, other times we are taking a leap on an idea too promising to pass up. We are always learning, grantmaking, raising money and building connections to help fuel the great work happening across the communities of Whatcom County.





There is no other place like Whatcom County.



It is beautiful, it is flawed,





...and it is filled with potential.



Left to right: Ferndale residents Matthew Beach, and daughter Adalee, attend a Rangers soccer training at Phillips 66 Soccer Park; attendees at the Catherine Mahaffey East Whatcom Wellness Fair in Kendall; Intalco employees Tony Duralia and Mark Waslohn are among a handful of people maintaining the facility since aluminum production was curtailed and hundreds laid off in late 2020; Pre-school teacher Altynay Bekbossyn serving snacks at Seedlings Early Learning Center.







## It is the Community Foundation's charge to help steward the community's many assets and propel us toward a future that works for everyone.

Dual calamities have paradoxically brought the community together and, in some ways, driven it apart, cracking us wide open in the process. We find ourselves in rich territory, ripe for new ways of thinking and doing.

Are you ready to dig into this moment with us? Together we can cultivate neighborliness. Together, we can lift community voices and invest in equity and hope to make this beautiful place we call home the very best it can be. Together, we are so much more than the sum of our parts.

Mauri Ingram  
President & CEO  
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**Want to connect with your community?**

Connect with the Whatcom Community Foundation.  
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