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June 5, 2025

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Community Clears School Meal Debt for Graduating Seniors Across LWSD

Over \$15,000 raised in a matter of days to ensure every senior walks the stage debt-free

Redmond, WA – [June 5, 2025], In a powerful demonstration of compassion and community action, donors across the Lake Washington School District (LWSD) came together to erase school meal debt for graduating seniors—surpassing the \$15,000 goal in just a few days.

Through a partnership between the Lake Washington Schools Foundation (LWSF) and the Lake Washington School District, the campaign launched with one clear message: every student deserves to graduate with pride, not the weight of unpaid meal balances. The response from the community was swift and inspiring.

“Students shouldn’t have to worry about how they’ll be nourished in order to be ready to learn,” said Katy Philips, Executive Director of LWSF. “This outpouring of support shows just how deeply our community cares about removing barriers to education and helping all students focus on their future.”

Behind the scenes, local educators had been raising awareness about the issue. At Juanita High School, the Equity Team had already worked to eliminate senior meal debt in previous years. “These debts often stem from complex personal and systemic factors,” said Associate Principal Terry Jess. “Immigration concerns, income thresholds that don’t reflect local cost of living, and gaps in communication about available resources all contribute to the problem.”

While longer-term solutions may require policy changes at the state and federal levels, this campaign focused on urgent impact—and it worked. Thanks to the collective generosity of individuals, families, businesses, and one longtime anonymous donor who made a substantial contribution, every graduating senior in LWSD will now cross the stage this month free from the burden of school meal debt.

Local business leaders also played a key role. After learning about the need, the Greater Kirkland Chamber of Commerce and its members contributed over \$3,000 toward the effort—underscoring how partnerships between schools, nonprofits, and businesses can create meaningful change.

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About Lake Washington Schools Foundation

The Lake Washington Schools Foundation is a non-profit organization that works in partnership with the community to support students, families, and educators in the Lake Washington School District. From removing barriers to learning to promoting mental health and academic readiness, LWSF programs help ensure all students have the resources they need to thrive, now and in the future.

To learn more, visit www.lwsf.org.

LWSF is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, tax identification number 55-0891792.