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LWSF BENEFIT RAISES \$200,000 FOR LOCAL STUDENTS

EVENT FOCUSED ON DIVERSITY, INCLUSION, AND EQUITY EFFORTS IN SCHOOLS

Redmond, WA, May 6, 2022 – Thanks to a host of compassionate donors and sponsors, Lake Washington Schools Foundation’s 2022 *Be the Bridge* Spring Benefit presented by Google raised more than \$200,000 to support its mission helping students and families in the Lake Washington School District (LWSD).

Be the Bridge premiered at noon on Thursday, March 28, and is available to stream on-demand now.

“I was honored to be a part of this event,” said *Be the Bridge* master of ceremonies and Chief Meteorologist for KIRO 7 News, Morgan Palmer. Mr. Palmer’s segments were filmed and produced at the KIRO 7 studio, with time and talent graciously donated not only by Mr. Palmer but also by the skilled KIRO 7 production team.

“We felt like we won the lottery when we saw Morgan’s segments. His clarity and compassion set the perfect tone for our program,” said Lake Washington Schools Foundation (LWSF) Executive Director Katy Philips. “We are so grateful to Morgan for being our MC, and to the KIRO 7 team for providing material that was perfectly polished and ready for primetime.”

Former KING 5 reporter Amy Moreno donated expert voiceovers that gave a strong narrative continuity to the program, which was produced by Eastlake High School alumnus and current University of Washington student Eli Corriveau of HotSpark Media. *Be the Bridge* provided insight into several of the diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in the district that are supported by LWSF.

Tesla STEM High School student Kai Vanderlip described how he used a grant from LWSF to purchase a collection of children’s literature about the incarceration of Japanese Americans during WWII for over 14,000 students in 33 elementary schools in the Lake Washington School District.

Amber Peterson, Teacher-Librarian at International Community School, and Liz Haggerty, Library Media Specialist at Kirkland Middle School, discussed the impact of LWSF’s grant on the Battle of the Books, a district-wide reading competition that promotes reading comprehension, academic excellence, and teamwork for 7,000 middle school students.

Liliana Medina, founder of Sistema Escolar USA, revealed how LWSF's support has helped bring culturally-relevant communications in the form of weekly video newsletters to Latino families.

Dr. Jon Holmen, superintendent of the LWSD and a former elementary teacher, delved into the district's efforts to support all students, and confirmed its steadfast partnership with the Foundation.

"Over the course of the pandemic, Lake Washington has worked together with the Foundation to be responsive to the needs of our students," Dr. Holmen noted. "Strong partnerships between the district and the organizations sponsored by the Foundation help us all work together for the benefit of our students."

LWSF Board of Trustees President Nancy Colburn introduced LWSF's work with library diversity as a project for which she has a distinctive passion. Cathy Webb, Mark Twain Elementary Librarian, explained why it is important for students to see themselves and their peers reflected in school library collections, and discussed the Foundation's commitment to revitalizing library collections throughout the Lake Washington School District.

Performances by The Royals, a modern jazz band comprised of local high school students, bookended the program. The event was dedicated to the memory of Aaron Thorson Brown, who was a student at Henry David Thoreau Elementary school in Redmond until his untimely death from cancer in 1998.

Altogether, *Be the Bridge* was compelling and informative. But did it accomplish its primary goal?

"Absolutely," confirmed Ms. Philips, who has been with the Foundation since 2017. "This is a fundraiser, first and foremost. Our sponsors, Trustees, Table Captains, Ambassadors, matching pool donors, and individual donors worked together to raise more than \$200,000. That's an extraordinary figure for a virtual event. Thank you to everyone who has helped fuel our mission for another year."

The \$28,500 matching pool, which doubled donations of \$200 and up, was depleted on the day of the premiere, but Ms. Philips and her team are offering a free ticket to its upcoming donor appreciation Happy Hour to any donor who has contributed \$350 or more this school year.

This year's *Be the Bridge* was presented by Google. Additional major corporate sponsorship was provided by Amazon, Cornerstone General Contractors, Lydig Construction, Microsoft, and Overlake Medical Center & Clinics, as well as GLY, McKinstry, PRK Livengood, Sodexo, and Waste Management.

To watch or donate to *Be the Bridge*, visit <https://www.lwsf.org/bethebridge>.

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The Lake Washington Schools Foundation gathers and deploys community resources to enhance academic access and to nurture all students' emotional well-being.

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