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LWSF's *Be the Bridge* Event Surpasses Expectations, Raising Over \$260K for Local Students

REDMOND, WA – [May 2, 2024], The Lake Washington Schools Foundation is thrilled to announce the outstanding success of this year's *Be the Bridge* Spring Benefit on March 28, which significantly surpassed last year's achievements by raising over \$260,000. The funds support a whole array of critical programs for students within the Lake Washington School District, including mental health initiatives, mentoring, and academic enrichment that directly impact student lives.

This year's event brought over 350 community members together in a united effort to support the educational and emotional needs of students. Emceed by Chief Meteorologist for KIRO 7 News Morgan Palmer, the luncheon featured inspiring videos and testimonials from students, teachers, and community volunteers.

Attendees were particularly moved by the heartwarming stories shared by this year's speakers. Stephanie Zeul and Marcus Grinde, both dedicated volunteers in the LINKS Lunch Buddy mentoring program, gave attendees an intimate look at the importance of one-on-one mentoring, showcasing their significant impact on students in need of companionship and support.

Kelly Easton, LINKS Lunch Buddy coordinator at Samantha Smith Elementary, remarked, "I've had the great honor and pleasure of watching these children change and be excited to see their mentors; the smiles, the laughter, just the evolution through this whole process. These mentors [bring] this unconditional care and love for these kids."

Adding to the event's depth, special guests from Tesla STEM High School, including school counselor Chase Covington, Behavioral Health Support Specialist Cora Goss-Grubbs, and student Anisha Vaish, shared their experiences with the implementation of Teen Mental Health First Aid training at their school. Their insights shed light on the importance of mental health education and its positive impact on student wellbeing and the entire school community, further emphasizing the critical need for funding such initiatives.

"We are immensely grateful for the overwhelming support from our community," said Katy Philips, LWSF's Executive Director. "Every contribution at *Be the Bridge* not only raises funds but also awareness and involvement in our mission to nurture the potential of each student in the Lake Washington School District."

The Lake Washington Schools Foundation extends heartfelt thanks to its sponsors, donors, and community partners who came together to make a difference, ensuring that the vital programs continue to grow and positively influence the lives of students. Major support for *Be the Bridge* was provided by Google, Amazon, Microsoft, Overlake Medical Center & Clinics, and Lydig Construction, as well as BNBuilders, Lake Washington Youth Soccer Association, Lease Crutcher Lewis, McKinstry, PRK Livengood, Sodexo, Skanska, and Waste Management.

The success of *Be the Bridge* was also made possible through the dedication of Trustees, LWSD leadership and staff, Table Captains, Ambassadors, Program Leaders, volunteers, Matching Pool Donors, and event speakers, especially emcee Morgan Palmer.

For more information about the event or to learn how you can make a life-changing difference in the lives of children in our community, please visit www.lwsf.org.

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The Lake Washington Schools Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to ensuring that all students in the Lake Washington School District have access to high-quality educational opportunities.

Through fundraising and community support, the foundation aims to remove barriers, build connections, enhance learning, and build connections to enable all students to succeed academically and personally.

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