



Community Voices, Community Connections

Putting the 'Community' Back in Community Foundation

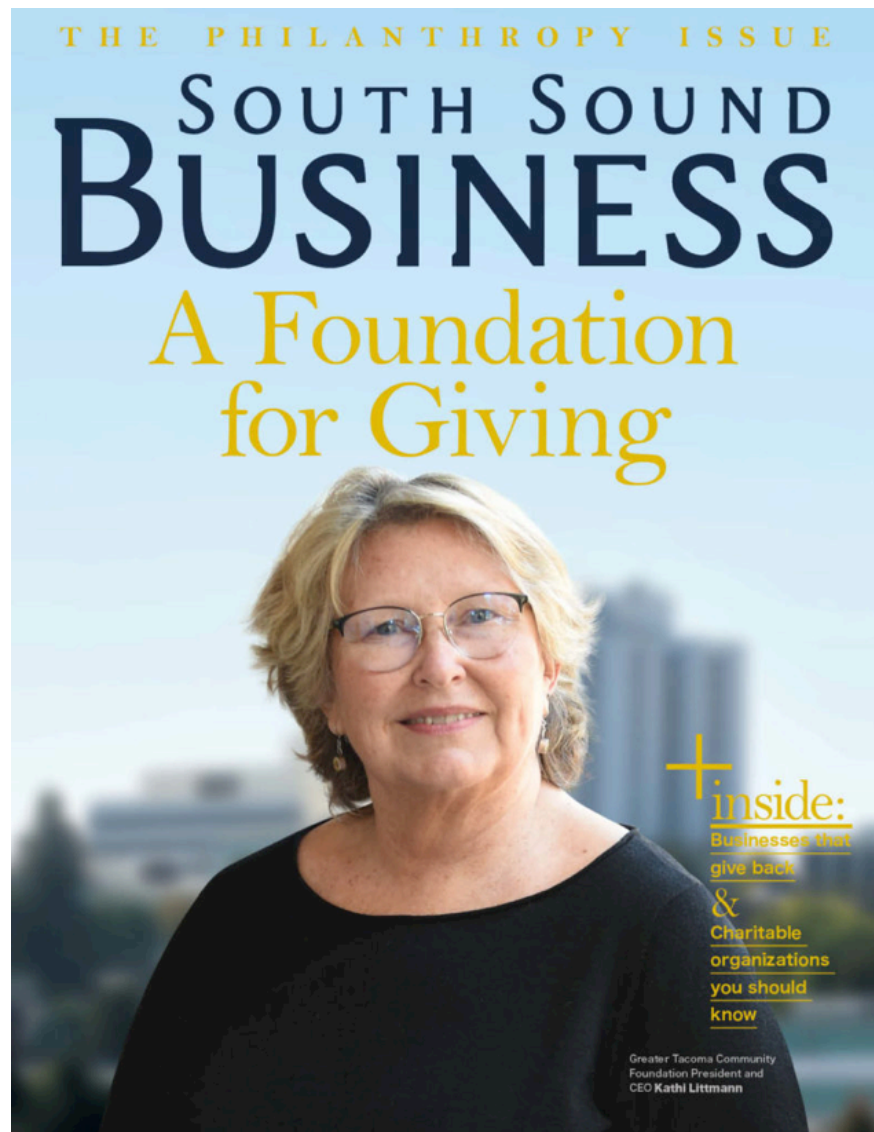
South Sound Business Magazine recently visited GTCF CEO & President Kathi Littmann to learn more about our work and vision. They feature their interview in this month's issue, saying:

"GTCF does more than simply administer donor-funded grants. The organization is a resource and knowledge base for individuals and businesses who want to engage in philanthropy and charitable giving."

"Indeed, when someone approaches GTCF to set up a donor fund, the first things Littmann and her team want to know are what they care about, what they want to see in the community, and what things give them joy. From there, GTCF tries to figure out how to leverage what a donor wants along with what others in the community need."

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"We've got a whole bunch of different tools in our kit," Littman said. "We are connected to those (people and organizations) that are actually doing all the work. We make the introductions."



Making A Difference Starts With Making Connections

Chris Harvey and Kate Larsen moved to Tacoma a little over a year ago from King and Snohomish counties. They brought with them a deep commitment to supporting their community.

Chris recognized a familiar spirit in Tacoma, "it reminded me a lot of communities I have lived in before where the level of self-awareness and willingness to directly confront issues in the community is very high. This is a community we can personally subscribe ourselves to and invest ourselves in as we take the time to learn about it. It's extremely exciting to me."



Chris and Kate connect with community needs and opportunities in many ways, including participating in public meetings. After several meetings, Chris noticed a common commitment to listening, "Here is the leader of some organization or here is a city council person, or here is the mayor, and I have heard many times that leader say

back to a question, 'let me talk to you after we are done.' There is a chance to really connect."

As the new director of Tacoma Public Library, Kate sees the community's challenges through her job, "it is a reflection of what's going on in society. Whatever is happening outside is happening in our doors as well. It is easy to see the impact the housing crisis and the drug crisis have had on urban areas in Pierce County." Her job also puts her in contact with people who want to help, "no matter where we are in Tacoma, there are a ton of people that see there are problems and want to make a difference."

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According to Chris, making a difference has been a goal for a long time, "we both have been charitable, but we just never had this giant ball of money. Like a lot of people, we talked about if we won the lottery, we would give so much to charity. Well, by selling two houses at the peak of the market, we hit a lottery compared to the experience of a lot of people out there. Now, we are doing what we said we were going to do if we ever won the lottery."

Recently, Chris and Kate opened a Donor Advised Fund to help fulfill their philanthropic goals. Donor Advised Funds are the fastest growing giving vehicle in the country. A hybrid between a private foundation and giving directly to charity, Donor Advised Funds enable individuals to donate cash and non-cash assets, like real estate, and then have the money grow over time as they choose where and when to direct the funds to charitable causes. It's a tool that offers immediate tax advantages as well as the flexibility to develop a longer-term giving strategy.

For Kate, the Donor Advised Fund, "was a tool that could be used in a shorter term, as opposed to building an endowment over our lifetime. We felt like we would want to make contributions sooner, rather than later, but also still have a place where some seed money might sit and build over time. That could potentially be more powerful over time rather than just a one-time gift to a couple of different organizations."

Kate sees the many opportunities for connection in Tacoma as the starting point for everyone to make a difference and build a stronger community, "if you would just take a second and think about how you might make an impact,

Expanded Learning Opportunities Help Students Learn Empathy and Cooperation

Standing at the door to their school gymnasium, Caleb and his classmates giggled playfully in a huddle. “Remember your audience can see you, so you are on stage now,” their director reminded them. They quickly straightened up and smiled, confidently taking their places to welcome their incoming guests.

Caleb and his fellow door greeters were participants in the LENS Project, an Expanded Learning Opportunity provided by Tacoma Arts Live. LENS, which stands for Learn Empathy Negotiation & Self, uses creative projects and art-based activities to teach positive social-emotional skills and foster the development of empathy for others. “When students learn how to recognize and identify their emotions, negotiate with others to solve conflict together in a peaceful way, and empathize with other people’s emotions and what they might be experiencing, those are skills that will serve them in whatever career or life path they pursue,” says Marsh Walner, Education Manager at Tacoma Arts Live.



“The nature of creating art is rooted in self-expression, so going through the creative process is helping students to inform their own experiences and what it is they want to share with the world.”

The program, which takes place over the course of 8-weeks, culminates with a family Skill Share event led by the students in which they become the teachers and share what they’ve learned with their friends and family. The students at Edison Elementary in Tacoma led off their Skill Showcase by inviting the audience to view their Frames of Reference projects, which were customized photo frames that each participant made illustrating their own personal roles in life and the expectations that go along with them.

Over the course of the 45-minute presentation, they

also demonstrated several acting exercises they had learned and a couple dances where each student had the opportunity to add their own special move in the middle of the choreographed routine.

“The nature of creating art is rooted in self-expression,” says Walner, “so going through the creative process is helping students to inform their own experiences and what it is they want to share with the world.” Walner adds that, in addition to inspiring self-expression, the LENS curriculum is also designed to engage students in group experiences that naturally teach them to work collaboratively with others to share ideas and develop resiliency to know they still have value even if their ideas don’t end up being used in the end product.

One of the highlights of the Showcase for Caleb was an activity called Emotion Shopping where he got to bring his mom up on stage and they took turns “trying on” each other’s emotions to see what they looked and felt like. “It taught us about empathy,” Caleb said, “I like it because you get to share your feelings and understand how other people feel too.”

Beyond the individual skills students learn through LENS, Walner says the program has long-term benefits for the community as well. “We’ve researched a lot in how the social emotional learning and artistic learning can lead to reduction in crime rates and increases in civic engagement and community involvement, so we are looking to serve those needs as well our own intrinsic desire to make the arts accessible to all.”

Tacoma Arts Live is one of 24 organizations currently offering Expanded Learning Opportunities through the Tacoma Whole Child partnership. Students at 12 Elementary Schools in Tacoma now have access to Expanded Learning Opportunities like LENS through this community-wide effort to ensure every child is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged.

Greater Tacoma Community Foundation, Tacoma Public Schools, and numerous community partners are working together to expand this partnership by providing aligned, equitable, high quality social, emotional, and academic development opportunities to students in and out of school. To learn more about increasing Expanded Learning Opportunities for Tacoma youth, contact GTCF for ways to support programming.

Spark Grants Light Up Communities



It all started with a conversation. Sandra Smith, a real estate agent from Buckley, says she was talking with her teenage daughter and a group of classmates about a lack of opportunity to contribute to community when the idea for Merry on Main was born. “They all said, ‘We would [get involved] if there was stuff to do,’” remembers Smith. “I’d had this dream to do a holiday lane for the past 15 years...and it fell out of my mouth, ‘What do you think about this?’”

“They all said, ‘We would [get involved] if there was stuff to do.’”

The idea was to decorate all the houses and businesses along the town’s Main Street for the holidays. Smith’s hope was that it would bring people from the Buckley community together to come see all the lights and support local businesses by attracting new visitors as well. The concept was a hit with the young people, and according to Smith, their support has been integral to making it happen. “We have students from DECA, the Honor Society, and different clubs from the school. To see them all taking responsibility and taking these leadership roles was very inspiring.”

“Once they saw this was something that was really going to make an impact to the community, everybody brought their talent and time and made contributions.”

Smith says the Spark Grant she received earlier this year to launch Merry on Main served as a catalyst for involvement from numerous individuals and organizations. “Once they saw this was something that was really going to make an impact to the community, everybody brought their talent and time and made contributions.”

Merry on Main ran through December 25th with special events hosted by local business and community groups on select nights.

Sandra’s story is a prime example of the type of grassroots change GTCF supports with Spark Grants, and we are excited to see the impact made in Pierce County by our newest group of recipients as well.

Winter 2018 Spark Grant Recipients

Raising Girls

Provides necessary hygiene products to under-served girls in the South Sound making it possible to eliminate humiliation, promote pride, and share love to hundreds of girls in our community.

Now You’re Speaking My Language

Increasing food bank accessibility for non- English speakers through translation work and bilingual volunteers.

Stigmatized

An opportunity for community members who struggle with mental illness to gather in a stigma-free zone and express themselves artistically. A safe space will be provided for gathering, sharing ideas, creating and displaying work.

Stewart Elementary Career Curiosity Fair

A unique career fair geared toward young children and their parents to spark interest in a diversity of jobs and different career paths after high school.

Mataala

The project is to build student led Polynesian Clubs in different high schools that work alongside us to provide, up to, but

not limited to: resources for education, food, emotional and motivational support, and curriculum accountability, to build a foundation that will support them in any path they choose to take after high school.

VT Radio

An online radio station with a basic studio in Hilltop Tacoma that produces several live and diverse shows in Spanish, as well as 3 recorded shows, with different types of music in English and Spanish. VT radio transmits 24 hrs a day, 7 days a week, providing the opportunity for members of our Pierce County community to create audio content, learn radio communication skills, and to announce events occurring in the community.

Young Leaders Bring Diverse Experiences and Vision to GTCF's Youth Philanthropy Board

Sometimes it can take a while for a new group to feel comfortable working together. One thing GTCF Program Director Janece Levien appreciates about the new members of this year's Youth Philanthropy Board (YPB) is their willingness to embrace discomfort in an effort to cultivate positive change.

"After a conversation at our last meeting around identity and place in community, one member said that she was uncomfortable, but that it was a good uncomfortable," Levien recalls. "With this type of mindset, I know these youth have potential to strengthen identity, voice, and a true sense of equity for communities in Pierce County."

The 15 new members of this year's Youth Philanthropy Board are a diverse group of emergent leaders from schools and service learning programs across Pierce County. Ranging in age from 15-24, they bring a spectrum of skills and experiences as well as a shared dedication to giving back to the community that gave them opportunities to succeed.



"I have experienced many hardships being a low-income woman of color from Tacoma, so I know the needs of people from Tacoma first hand. That is why I have developed a deep care in furthering opportunities for others to be successful despite what barriers they may be facing. I am a young activist and believe in utilizing my voice to support others." – Zayda, age 18

"Youth can play a substantial role in making our community better. Today's youth are the leaders of tomorrow and as we find ways to be part of the community and are given the resources to explore our passions and interests, we can grow as a group and create new communities, thereby strengthening the whole." – Rachel, age 17

"I aim to educate, empower, and engage youth in my community so that they realize the power and potential they have within themselves to become masters of their own future in the City of Destiny." – Dylan

Over the course of the next nine months, these YPB members will have the opportunity to participate in workshops focused on professional development to promote and elevate youth voice in Pierce County. In addition, they will play a role in providing resources to local youth-serving organizations.

"The goal of YPB is to bring youth voice into community decisions", says Levien. "When youth are given an opportunity to discuss topics that directly impact their daily lives, there is an investment in critical thinking and

essential life skills that go beyond the work of this cohort to impact our community in a positive way.”

2018-19 GTCF Youth Philanthropy Board Members

Annalycia Matthews, University of Washington –Tacoma
Audrey Medisch, Wilson High School – Running Start
Brooklyn Hose, Curtis High School
Cristobal Luevanos-Perez, Mt. Tahoma High School
Dylan Tran, University of Washington

Emily Schell, AmeriCorps –Tacoma Rescue Mission
Harold Liufau, University of Puget Sound
Lucy Gould, Stadium High School
Musa Abdirahman, University of Puget Sound
Ngocbich Tran, Science & Math Institute
Noe Rosales, Mt. Tacoma High School
Rachel Nunes, Curtis High School
Rita Tumbusch, Science & Math Institute
Tori Brockman, Curtis High School
Zayda Wilson, AmeriCorps – Peace Community Center

Site Visits: Seeing is Believing

When Bill and Nancy Smith walked into the new Eastside Community Center at the recent grand opening, they could hardly believe what they were seeing. “Our perception of what the community center would look like was nothing compared to what was actually built,” said Bill. “The thought and planning that has gone into this facility is incredible.” The Smiths knew it took significant effort on the part of many people to bring a vision of that magnitude to life.

Two years ago, while the Community Center was still in the planning stages, the Smiths learned the project launched after the tragic murder of Billy Ray Shirley III. They were inspired to learn more, “Both Nancy and I consider ourselves somewhat ‘visual’ people. Sometimes things make a lot more sense to us when we can ‘see’ something as opposed to just hear about it.” Sherrana Kildun, GTCF Director of Philanthropy, suggested a site visit could give them a better understanding of the need for a community center on the Eastside of Tacoma.

“As hard as we try to paint a picture for our investors with graphs, pictures and stories, nothing captures the heart of our work more than seeing it in person.” – Carrie Holden, President|CEO Boys & Girls Clubs of South Puget Sound

A site visit is an opportunity to see first-hand how organizations approach their work, and also to ask questions and learn more about the issues. As Bill remembers it, “We were given a tour and background information from the executive director of the Greater Metro Parks Foundation and we also learned more about the needs of the Boys and Girls Club.”

For organizations, site visits give supporters a chance to experience their work in a moving and memorable way. “‘Seeing is believing’ is truly spot on when it comes to introducing our Club,” said Carrie Holden, President/CEO of the Boys & Girls Clubs of South Puget Sound. “As hard as we try to paint a picture for our investors with graphs, pictures and stories, nothing captures the heart of our work more than seeing it in person.”



At the Eastside Community Center opening, the Smiths continued to learn about challenges and opportunities for local youth, “We discussed the need to provide bus service from individual schools to the Eastside Community Center pool. Currently the school district does not have funds to bus children back-and-forth from their schools.” Site visits allow individuals to develop a personal relationship with the work, and to discover new connections.

GTCF provides a wide range of resources for individuals and organizations to work together for a stronger Pierce County. Reach out to GTCF’s donor services to learn more about how individual philanthropy can make a difference for the causes that matter to you.