



(Photo by Luisa Loi / SW Record)

South Whidbey Schools Foundation 2023/24 Annual Update

Building relationships between our community and schools to invest in learning experiences that inspire students in our ever-changing world.

2023/24 Classroom Grants

The South Whidbey Schools Foundation funded 22 classroom projects. These grants plus the principals' discretionary fund and new teacher stipends totaled \$62,097.

South Whidbey Elementary School:

- Drama Program for 3rd - 5th Grade
- 1st Grade Museum Program
- Creation Stations
- 4th Grade Native Plants Garden
- Universal Design For Learning (UDL) Materials
- Inclusive Transitional Kindergarten Materials
- Padilla Bay Estuary Field Study
- Woodland Park Zoo Trip
- Book Break Author Visits
- K-5 Handwork Program
- Yearbook Cameras

South Whidbey Middle School:

- Pug mill for the Ceramics Program
- Gaga Portable Ball Pit for PE
- Resonance in Sight & Sound Through AV Endeavors
- Magic, Myth, and Mystery Books & QRead Sets
- SW Middle School Instruments
- Warm Beach Camp Sweatshirts

South Whidbey High School:

- Advanced Ethnic Studies Field Trips
- Students of Color Conference
- Enhancing ELA Skills via Immersive Gaming Adventures
- Clayprons for the Ceramics Studio

All Schools:

- Principals' Discretionary Fund
- 17 New Teacher Stipends
- Volunteer Coordinator

Experiential learning is key to enhancing education

The future of education is changing. Schools are incorporating AI (Artificial Intelligence) and other new technologies while also addressing difficulties witnessed during the pandemic and even further back. The U.S., originally a leader in education, has been falling further behind.

We believe that experiential learning is key to enhancing education, especially when students are not worried about their safety and well-being.

Our Board responds to requests to provide experiential learning projects and opportunities for students on South Whidbey.

One of our latest projects involves connecting talent, wisdom and heart from the community into our indoor and outdoor classrooms – a knowledge bank of speakers. We are creating a database for educators to tap into knowledge that already exists in our community from individuals that would love to share it with young people.

We also meet regularly with the other two schools' foundations on Whidbey to benefit from synergistic creativity and problem-solving. It still takes a village... or an island... even in the age of the internet.



What is often cost prohibitive is the transportation of students to a site educators wish to have them experience. That is where the Schools Foundation can help.

You may be surprised to learn that some students rarely travel outside our small community. Through funding of an on-island field trip or one across the water, we want to ensure all students have opportunities to experience the wider world.

We appreciate the support of donors like you to keep funds available that have an effect on student learning that ripples and spreads into the future.

We can't do it without you, so thank you for your partnership!



**South Whidbey
Schools Foundation**
Igniting a love of learning

Drama program for SW Elementary School 3rd - 5th graders

Teachers Susan Ritzner, Val Brown and Caryn Plouf shared this report on a drama program funded by the Foundation.

Our spring musical, *Character Matters*, was a smashing success! We chose a play that focused on social/emotional learning and wanted it to have an impact, not just on the students in it, but the kids who saw it as well.

Here are some examples of the impact:

◆ After performing for the whole school in the morning, Val witnessed a classroom teacher discussing a picture book with her class. The students immediately connected the characters' actions to themes from the play. The kids even sang the chorus of one of the songs.

◆ It was great to watch the kids support each other by encouraging each other, being patient, and helping each other with lines. It



was extremely heartwarming to watch the cast include and support a special needs student. This student, who usually needs one-on-one adult support, was able to participate and be successful in his role because of the way the other students treated him.

◆ One student was very hesitant to sing. He thought maybe he would sing with the big group. We got him to practice a duet with a friend, and then as his confidence grew, he ended up singing a solo and being the most animated kid on the stage.

Note from a parent...

I wanted to tell you how much my daughter is LOVING being a part of the musical. Every day she comes home from rehearsal enthusiastic and full of feel-good feelings. We're all excited for the performance. It's been a high

quality enrichment activity for her. Thank you for all your work pulling it together.

Also, as working parents, we so appreciate having the activity take place right after school, enabling her to get to rehearsal herself. I'm not sure her participation would have been do-able without that easy transition from school. I know that aspect creates more juggling for you guys.

Anyway, thank you for investing in the kids like this. You guys are awesome.

The night of the family performance there was standing room only. It was hard to say who was prouder - the kids or the parents. One parent cried through the whole performance. Thank you for the support!

5th grade Padilla Bay Estuary field study

During this late March field trip to the Padilla Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve, students learned about ecosystems and visited an estuary, guided by science professionals.

They experienced hands-on science and saw displays about human effects on water quality, used microscopes to view small creatures, gazed into huge aquariums, and touched sea life, too.

This field trip supports Next Generation Science Standards and helped prepare them for the 5th grade state science test.

Padilla Bay is a habitat unlike most. Students commented about the smells, the suction on their boots that slowed them to barely moving, and were both laughing and in awe.



They compared these tide flats with those of beaches nearby them on South Whidbey.

There was an estuary curriculum students completed before going to Padilla Bay and a post-test when they returned after the trip to demonstrate the impact of the experience.

—John LaVassar, 5th grade teacher



www.SWSFoundation.org

Dear Foundation Supporters,

I am constantly in awe of young people today. They have so much more to navigate than I did at their age. Not only what they are expected to learn, but what they will actually need to know, which is changing so rapidly, and all while keeping up with constantly shifting technology, social media, world events etc. Plus they need to be ever discerning of what is real and true and what is fabricated, hyped, marketed, or gimmicky.



How do they manage it? And how do teachers deal with all the distractions and quickly changing environments in and outside of school? One way is to engage students in ways that will have them fully in the moment, forgetting about their phones.

Beyond the necessary materials and supplies like scientific and graphing calculators or enhancement to the ceramics program, grant requests that get our Board super excited are often things like author visits (live and virtual), a life skills cooking unit, ethnic studies field trips, a trip to Padilla Bay Estuary, Woodland Park Zoo or the Pacific Science Center.

Whether a field trip to a local history museum or a trip into the big city, you may be surprised at how many of our students don't do this with their families. Thus, these trips are vital for providing a bigger experience of themselves and the world.

We have begun creating a database for staff that lists local talent and expertise of folks willing to come into the classroom to share their knowledge or experiences with students. Our older population can be of benefit to students if we, as a Foundation, can bridge that gap between young and old, by facilitating connections and opportunities.

State and Federal funding of education continues to decrease while costs increase. We, on the Board of the Foundation, hope to make that less of a detriment to the students here on South Whidbey. We are part of a global human race and economy and we wish to help students, even on our small rural island in the Salish Sea, to feel inspired and confident in engaging with the much wider world.

We hope you will support our efforts any way you can. The inventors, musicians, doctors, pilots and environmental decision-makers of our future are walking the halls at South Whidbey Schools. It takes all of us, working together, to create the world we wish to live in. Wouldn't you agree?

With sincere gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Shelly".

Shelly Ackerman, President
South Whidbey Schools
Foundation

EIN# 91-1683607



P.S. Please make a generous year-end or an ongoing monthly 'evergreen' gift to the South Whidbey Schools Foundation.



Children's Museum visit

Thanks to a Foundation grant, 1st graders were able to have a hands-on experience full of gadgets, gears, water, and motion, in a variety of playful learning galleries at the Imagine Children's Museum in Everett.



4th graders create two native plant gardens

We worked with 'Farmer Cary' and partnered with Pacific Rim Institute to create two gardens with native plants. Students dedicated a recess/lunch time each week to work and learn in the garden. They used plant identification cards to decide which plants would thrive and where in the garden they were most likely to grow.

– Betsy Hofius, 4th grade teacher



3rd grade field trip to Woodland Park Zoo

Thank you for funding transportation for the 3rd grade field trip to the Woodland Park Zoo which enhanced our English Language Arts unit on Animal Classifications.

It also provided an opportunity to many students to visit the zoo and travel to Seattle who would not have been able to do so otherwise.

We had over 30 parent chaperones join us which created a unique chance for families to connect with other families as well as with their own child. We would like this experience to continue. This year we were able to secure an additional grant from the Woodland Park Zoo to cover the cost of tickets.

We really appreciate all that you do to support students and teachers. Many thanks!

– Lori O'Brien & Marcie Currier, 3rd grade teachers



Universal Design for Learning resources

Special Education teacher Missy Pritchett reported on a grant for materials to help students learn in a variety of ways.

The learning resources you supplied by this grant support the use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) in our special education classroom.

UDL is a teaching approach that works to accommodate the needs and abilities of all learners and eliminates unnecessary hurdles in the learning process.

The classroom is a-buzz with engaged students growing and sharing their learning as you can read from these student comments below.

I want to thank you for giving my school money and the headphones. It helps my class focus and be able to concentrate. Thank you for your generosity, Emma

I want to thank you for being so kind and for giving us STEM toys. I like having choice and playing on the computers. I like to build things. Thank you for caring, Desiree

Thank you for the play money. It is fun to count with and play a shopping game. It makes math class fun. With gratitude, Kasen

Students of Color conference funded



More than a dozen South Whidbey High School students attended "Joy and Justice: From Smiles to Solidarity"—the Students of Color Conference hosted by Lake Washington School District at Cascadia College.

Its purpose was to highlight the power and fortify the wisdom of historically marginalized and traditionally non-dominant communities, such as students who are Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) by introducing them to concepts and structures that will strengthen their identity development, enhance their awareness of others, prompt social justice/social activism and encourage personal development.

Volunteer Coordinator position shows results

Volunteer Coordinator Melissa Field is in her second year in the position, which is partially funded by donations through the SW Schools Foundation.

Last year, she coordinated 1,687 volunteer hours at the Elementary School where she works 7 hours a week facilitating volunteer activities including coordination of the Orca Store, Reading with Rover, Random Acts of Kindness Week, Hearing & Vision Screening, classroom volunteers, field trips, overnight camp trips (Camp Kirby–5th grade / Camp Casey– 4th grade), lunchtime student clubs, and end of year celebrations



With increased funding for additional hours, she hopes to expand her efforts at the Middle and the High School.

Superintendent Jo Moccia wrote a note the Foundation:

We so appreciate the volunteer coordinator position! Melissa is able to be on-site, connect with teachers directly and ask them what would be helpful for their class or program and then is able to match volunteers to need. The absence of this would be deeply felt....Thanks again for all you are doing!

Program rewards students for good behavior

Students at South Whidbey Elementary School are rewarded with 'whale's tails' tickets for exhibiting good behavior such as safety, respect, responsibility and kindness.

They can exchange the tickets for items at a pop-up "Orca Store" or pool their tickets for a class experience such as a 'bubble party' or



a 'Popsicles with the Principal' party.

"This program has been a powerful addition to our Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) and has had SO many positive impacts on our school culture and students," reports Principal Susie Richards.

"We couldn't have done it without the support of the Schools Foundation! Between Melissa Field's recruitment of volunteers helping us launch, to funds provided through the Principal's Discretionary Fund; your support made it happen," Richards noted. THANK YOU for all you do for us!

– Susie Richards SWES Principal

Saying thanks to John Riley

Recently retired South Whidbey Schools Foundation Treasurer and Board member John Riley was honored with a standing ovation at the 2024 Foundation Gala for his more than 12 years of stellar volunteer service to the Foundation.



Financial Recap for 2023/24 School Year

In fiscal year 2023/24, the South Whidbey Schools Foundation received donations totaling \$69,979. This, coupled with fund-raising efforts of \$18,012 and interest of \$8, brought our total general fund revenues to \$87,999.

Expenses and grant awards plus fund-raising disbursements out of our general fund totaled \$92,293.

2024 Gala Fundraiser – We had donations/ ticket sales of \$44,000 and total expenses of \$10,500, resulting in a net gala profit of about \$33,500.

There were 24 classroom grants, teacher stipends and building funds awarded totaling \$62,097, which included \$18,000 for use by each of the campus Principals at their discretion, and 17 new teacher stipends totaling \$5,100.

SWSF Balances (All Funds)

July 1, 2023 to June 30, 2024:

Beginning Fund Balance:	\$ 90,216
(See below for sub-totals)	
General & Endowment Accounts:	\$ 71,558
Extra Mile/Mentorship Awards	\$ 0
Designated Funds Total:	\$ 22,671
Ending Fund Balance:	\$ 94,229

Designated Funds

Disbursements through Designated Funds are earmarked by donors for specific support to academic areas, programs, or scholarships.

- SWES Library Fund
- SWES Yearbooks Fund
- SWES Salmon Hatchery Program
- Art From the Heart
- SWES Math Tutoring Program
- Hometown Heroes
- Make a Wish - Library Books
- Whidbey Community Foundation
- School Farms Program
- SWHS Drama Club
- SWHS Soccer Programs
- SWMS Instrument Fund
- UBG&CC Members Scholarship Fund
- ALE Program

South Whidbey Schools Foundation Gala

\$33,564 raised for classroom educational grants



The Foundation's largest annual fundraiser returned to the Useless Bay Golf and Country Club on May 3.

Attendees enjoyed the South Whidbey Middle School Jazz Band under the direction of Chris Harshman which played during social hour.

Then the SW High School Show Choir directed by Paula Ludtke performed while attendees enjoyed a sit-down dinner.

After a welcome by Bob Rupp, SWSF Board President Shelly Ackerman introduced keynote speaker Susie Richards who shared her unique vantage point as a local student, parent, volunteer, teacher, SWSF Board member, and now as the Principal of the South Whidbey Elementary School.

Her message, "It's for the Kids!", highlighted what she learned from beloved Foundation supporters Jean Shaw and Jim Freeman, who passed away two years ago.

High School teacher Justin Silva emceed a lively after-dinner auction featuring unique experiences and tours, plus two groupings of assorted red wines.

A 'Raise the Paddle' bidding resulted in \$21,055 in donations. That, coupled with ticket sales and business sponsorships raised the total Gala revenue to \$44,081. After expenses the net income total was \$33,564.

Save the date for the 2025 SWSF Gala on Saturday, April 26 at Useless Bay Golf and Country Club. The theme will be a retro "Prom Night."



Thank You to Our 2023/2024 Donors...

Your contributions help ignite the love of learning for South Whidbey students!



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South Whidbey Schools Foundation
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Gifts are tax-deductible.

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Freeland, WA 98249
Thank you!

Teachers receive Mentorship and 'Extra Mile' awards

Clyde Monma, SWSF Vice President, presented several teacher awards at the SW High School graduation assembly and at the SW Elementary School in June.

The annual **Excellence in Teaching: Mentorship Award** recognizes teachers, principals and other school-based staff who exemplify the kind of commitment to children that creates exceptional results.

The award was established by Steve Shapiro, MD, and his wife, Debora Valis, for students in the community to acknowledge and honor the leadership, mentorship and inspiration of specific teachers.

Maddy Pinkerton is the 2023/24 recipient of the Mentorship Award.

The Foundation's **Extra Mile Award** is given "to acknowledge and honor teachers who have gone the furthest in service of



Clyde Monma presented awards to Erin Reed, Kristin Codda, and Janet Hunter.

the South Whidbey education community." Candidates are nominated by their peers.

There were many nominations for the Extra Mile Award, and for the first time, six teachers and support staff received the award.

The recipients of the Extra Mile Award are: Becky Breeze, Erin Reed, Janet Hunter, Jenny Gochanour, Kristin Codda, and Mary Eaton.

Congratulations to all the recipients.



From left: Maddy Pinkerton, Mary Eaton, Jenny Gochanour, and Clyde Monma.

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