



Community Voices, Community Connections

PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED Distributes \$4.1 Million to Organizations Addressing Urgent Needs Related to COVID-19

From food access to childcare, housing & shelter to internet access, testing to personal protective equipment, local organizations in Pierce County are providing essential services that meet urgent health and basic human needs under COVID-19 conditions.

Thanks to [generous contributions](#) from 308 individual donors and 54 philanthropic funding partners, PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED raised \$7.3 million. As of July 31, \$4.1 million in funding has been distributed to more than 140 organizations providing those vital services. A minimum of \$3.2 million will be distributed over the next year.

Here is what three PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED recipients said about the work they are doing to keep our community thriving during a pandemic:

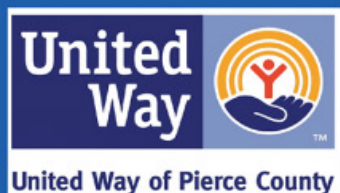
David Hirschberg Ph.D, Founder & Catalyst RAIN Incubator "In March, RAIN pivoted all resources to addressing the impact of COVID-19 infection,

recognizing early the devastating effect this pandemic could potentially have on our community.

The COVID-19 virus is exposing the inequity and disparity that exists in America today which is reflected in the fact that Black, Latinx and Native Americans are dying at higher rates, both from COVID-19 and systemic racism. At RAIN, equity guides our work in science education and evidenced based action, however we are committed to recognizing our personal biases, and we will take focused action to provide opportunities for people of color. Providing greater access to COVID-19 solutions is just one small step.

We are grateful to PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED in providing funding for this important work."

Cynthia Ricks-Maccotan, Violence Prevention Coordinator (CHI Franciscan), Facilitator of the Peninsula Violence Prevention Coalition, "The Key Peninsula Community has been hit hard with great need



**PIERCE COUNTY
CONNECTED: COVID-19
EMERGENCY RESPONSE
FUND**



around food access, adequate resources to shelter in place, behavioral health, and online/virtual supports. As a result, we've seen unprecedented numbers of families seeking meals and food at the three main Key Peninsula food banks.

We received funding to support area food banks, increase online/virtual assistance to families, provide rental assistance to families faced with eviction or insurmountable late fees, transportation assistance to families in need, and increased tele-mental health services.

We are learning just how resilient the community is. We haven't solved all the issues, but we have certainly come together to be there for each other in ways we probably never fathomed."

Tanya Durand, Executive Director at Children's Museum of Tacoma, powered by Greentrike, "Due to COVID-19 conditions, there are thousands of day camp spots that won't be offered this summer. Joining forces with Boys & Girls Club, MetroParks Tacoma, and YMCA enabled all of our organizations to continue meeting our missions by sharing our superpowers. 70% of our summer day camp attendees will be youth who qualify for free and reduced-cost lunches at school. This means our partnership will be able to help working parents feel secure about their children as they provide essential services in our community."

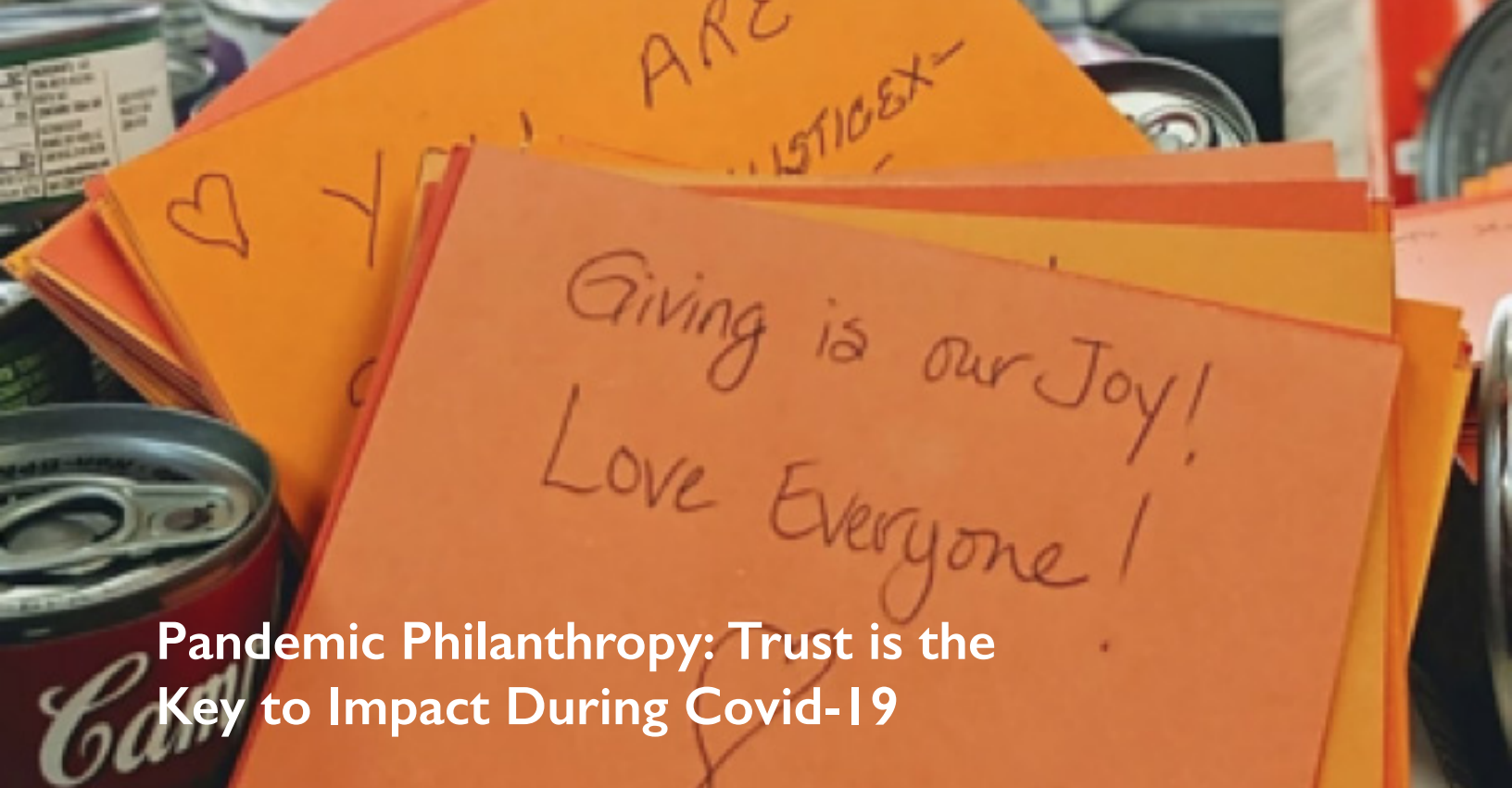
PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED was launched in March of 2020 when United Way of Pierce County and Greater Tacoma Community Foundation partnered to create the aligned philanthropic response to escalating needs due to COVID-19.

Rotary Club of Tacoma #8 is one of the PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED funders. **Linda Kaye Briggs, President of The Briggs Group and a member of Rotary Club Tacoma #8,** "Our Tacoma #8 club members felt strongly that as a "pillar" of our community for 110 years, we had a unique opportunity to offer COVID-19 relief in the most efficient manner. Our board of Directors quickly and unanimously agreed in choosing PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED as the most efficient avenue to help the most people who need a hand up during these times. Continuing our support of our community is simply, our privilege!"

Individual donors can make a difference for their communities during COVID-19 by contributing in any way they can. The aligned philanthropies encourage individual donors to give directly to the causes and organizations that matter to them.

To support funding for organizations directly serving vulnerable populations during COVID-19, donors are encouraged to donate to PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED fund. Online donations can be made through the GTCF and United Way Pierce County websites. You can also see a list of funding recipients and learn more about requesting funds at gtcf.org.





Pandemic Philanthropy: Trust is the Key to Impact During Covid-19

"A month ago, this was just an idea."

As Cassandra Williams was figuring out how to bring her newly leased Hilltop space up to code for her "Love by the Slice" baking business, COVID-19 hit. And so did community-based inspiration. A friend's Facebook post alerted Cassandra, a Tacoma native, to the fact that some of her neighbors were in need, with no way to get to the food bank or grocery store.

"I have my space and I can't bake, so I may as well use it for this right now," she reasoned. Within days, she had donations from community members, volunteers lined up, and a "box-and-drop" operation streamlined for delivery as "Revive Washington."

In another week, thanks to friends who directed her to [PIERCE COUNTY CONNECTED \(PCC\) Emergency Response funding](#)—an aligned philanthropic response to COVID-19 led by United Way of Pierce County and GTCF—she had \$20,000 to hire three staff members and get food to a growing number of people.

"A month ago, this was just an idea," she says.

"It's a good time to extend that trust to form new relationships related to the way our community is experiencing COVID-19."

That's the power of unrestricted giving, especially in this unprecedented time of crisis, according to Richard Woo, GTCF board member and retired CEO of The Russell Family Foundation, "PCC has brought down barriers such as lengthy applications and complex grant agreements and it acknowledges that the organizations, leaders, and residents closest to the emergent issues and their solutions are best qualified to maximize needed resources."

A growing number of funders call this approach trust-based philanthropy. "It's one thing to give an unrestricted gift to a nonprofit you know and trust," says Stacey Guadnola, GTCF's Director of Philanthropic Engagement. "But this new reality is highlighting needs we've never thought about, as well as nonprofits who are meeting those needs. So it's a good time to extend that trust to form new relationships related to the way our community is experiencing COVID-19."

Trust is one of the tips national philanthropy expert Bruce DeBoskey outlines in his article "[Giving in the time of COVID-19](#)," published just as many donors are asking themselves, "How do we best respond locally in this crisis?" He also recommends deepening local giving, keeping an eye on longer term needs, and taking time to "reflect on how we consume, share, collaborate, invest, and give to our near and far neighbors."

Perennial Tacoma philanthropist Pam Mayer subscribes

to the trust-based, local approach, especially now. “You could give from here to eternity,” she says, with respect to the “overwhelming” need COVID-19 has brought to light. Together, she and GTCF’s Stacey Guadnola identified needs that resonated with Pam and put together a strategy for unrestricted funding, beginning with childcare for first responders.

“How is this funding going to improve and serve communities that have not been well served in the past and that are suffering at a disproportionate level now?”



Volunteers for Revive Washington, in Tacoma's Hilltop neighborhood deliver supplies to those most in need

On the ground, that rapid-response funding makes all the difference. “The timing on our \$5,000 PCC grant was impeccable,” says Tom Maus, Director of the Harvest House food bank in Graham. “Our stocks were running low and we knew we were not going to meet the increased demand we were seeing” for “PowerPacks” of food for children in 11 area schools. Just as that realization hit, this faith-based organization was able to purchase what it needed to get through the end of school year.

Neither Revive Washington nor Harvest House had received GTCF funding before receiving the PCC grants. According to Richard Woo, crises like COVID-19 call for new vision. “Now is the time to use an equity lens,” he says. “We can all ask ourselves, “How is this funding going to improve and serve communities that have not been well served in the past and that are suffering at a disproportionate level now?”

Cassandra Williams’ PCC funding makes a difference to people in the Hilltop and throughout Tacoma. It allows her to train her staff, “trust them to do their jobs and then continue to work on increasing community awareness and securing resources,” as well as keeping up her “Love by the Slice” business of “curing sweet tooth all over the city.”

To learn more about trust-based philanthropy and unrestricted giving to support the causes you care about, contact [GTCF's Philanthropy team](#).



Understanding Your Community Helps Charitable Giving Support Racial Equity

Since COVID-19 shut down schools, the [Hilltop Artists'](#) glass hot shop furnaces at Jason Lee Middle School have been idle. But, Hilltop Artists' support for youth continues. On a recent afternoon, Executive Director Dr. Kimberly Keith worked from the dining room of the house where she grew up, via video meetings, getting creative with staff and community partners about how to make ends meet and keep students connected through what promises to be a tumultuous summer.

"When I went to Jason Lee back in the '70s—mixed-race with a single mom and free lunch—the world was different," Kimberly said. Today, the landscape has changed, but there's a lot that's stayed the same, "I take being a role model very seriously." The mentorship she received years ago prepared her to continue what she calls a "virtuous circle" through Hilltop Artists—connecting young people from diverse backgrounds to a better future through glass art.

Local and international protests and a surge in public discussion about systemic racism have many people asking how they can make a positive difference. Charitable giving to organizations led by people of color, like Hilltop Artists, is one way to support racial equity.

The [Association of Black Foundation Executives \(AFBE\)](#) released a list of imperatives for the philanthropic sector in [a joint statement on COVID and police shootings](#). Their first imperative is Build Agency, "Increase investments

in Black-led organizations that connect individuals and families to a wide array of resources and build power in our communities to lead substantive change." Those investments, according to AFBE, require "a robust partnership" between philanthropists, government, businesses, and Black communities.

GTCF fundholder Jim Walton—a long-respected voice for racial justice in Tacoma—agreed that supporting Black-led organizations is important, but he sees understanding as a critical first step, "Be at the core of this new awareness. Ground yourself. Take time to learn and understand what's going on in your community so you can maximize your resources, and then let GTCF help you put that in place." He described his 'bottom line' this way: "The organizations I fund must have an impact on African-American people. It's an added bonus if they're led by an African-American."

Jim Walton's approach, according to Robin Callahan, VP of Philanthropic Services at GTCF, shows how a giving strategy can support a donor's vision for impact, "A strategy starts with identifying the community issues you care deeply about. Next consider at which point in the system you would like to make your impact – do you want to support work dismantling systems of racial inequity through advocacy or policy change or provide services to those disproportionately impacted by racial inequity? Gaining community insight is critical to understanding who and what organizations in our community are doing that work well."

[AHAT Homecare](#) Executive Director David Strong is a self-described “Black gay man with health issues.” He spoke to the power of knowing the people whose lives you want to impact. AHAT Homecare offers Affordable Housing and Treatment to people living with HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis C. Most of his staff and clients are Black. “If it weren’t for racial inequity, we wouldn’t exist,” he said. David and his staff know exactly what their clients are up against, from lack of access to healthcare and an inherent mistrust of the medical system to the everyday struggle of racism.



*David Strong, Executive Director
Affordable Housing and Treatment
(AHAT)*

about race and the nonprofit world feels risky. Will it impact my relationships? Will funders and colleagues misunderstand?”

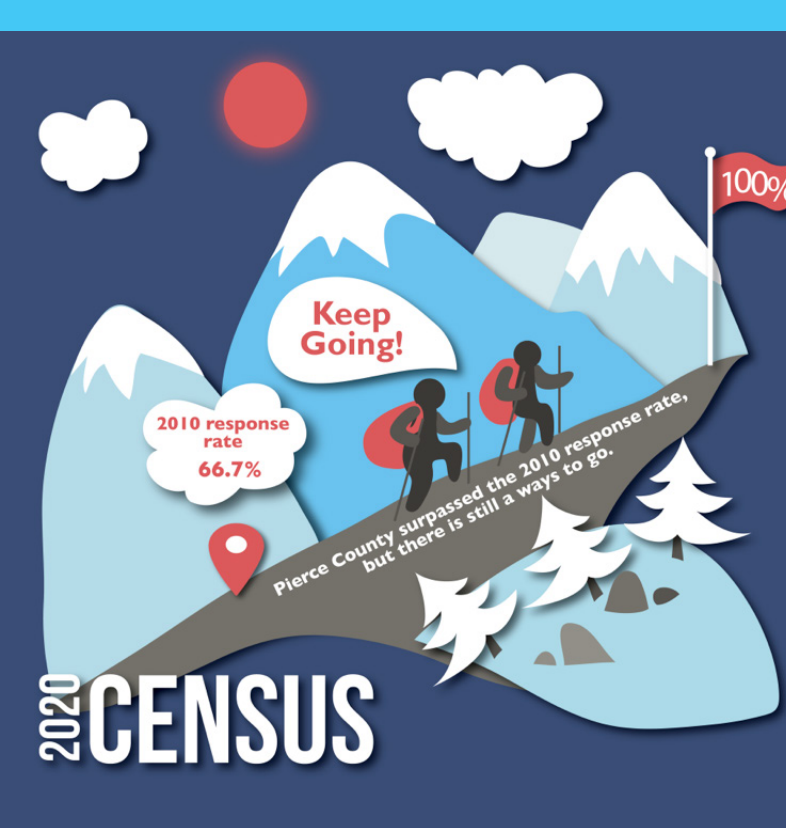
That frame of reference makes his team powerful allies for their clients. And yet, David said—just as he was mindful of the potentially perilous questioning his Black graveyard-shift employees might attract traveling to and from work during a recent Tacoma curfew—he believes he faces more scrutiny from funders and colleagues as a Black leader, “Just having this conversation

With COVID-19 conditions disproportionately affecting people of color and challenging nonprofit operations and service delivery, donor contributions are essential. “It needs to be more sustained and aimed at capacity building; not crisis-to-crisis in response to news headlines,” according to Jim Walton. David Strong and Kimberly Keith agree, and are living examples of the Black-led organizations AFBE says “have less staff, smaller budgets, and less operating reserves than white-led organizations.”

Meanwhile, the close and critical work toward racial equity continues: “Kids come talk to me about how they feel about being Black, gay ... whatever,” said Kimberly Keith. “I offer them that safe space to share thoughts and feelings and that’s how we make the world a better place—one person at a time, one conversation at a time.”

The best place for donors to start is by learning more about the leaders and organizations in your community. “Get immersed in what is going on so you have some connection,” advised Jim Walton. “Then your giving starts to come from your heart and not just from your head. Follow your money. Stay engaged.”

To learn more about building a strategy to support the causes you care about, contact [GTCE's Philanthropy team](#).



In June Pierce County surpassed the 2010 response rate of 66.7%, despite the conditions of COVID-19.

Despite COVID-19 Conditions Pierce County Beats the 2010 Census Self-Response Rate

Rural Pierce County communities like Buckley, South Prairie, Wilkeson, and Carbonado are often undercounted in census data. Steven Liefesen, Director of Equity and Achievement at White River School District, shared why having complete and accurate census data in rural communities he serves is so important, “We have a growing population of Hispanic families and the education of their kids matters just as much as the 5th generation Buckley families who have been there forever, and they have all of the resources that they need in front of them in order to help their kids become successful. Our responsibility is to every child, not just those kids. We take that responsibility really seriously and we want to make sure we have the resources available to meet those needs.”

“Prior to COVID-19, I didn’t fully understand the impact of the census, but it really hit home professionally this year when one of our grants was cut by 53% due to lack of census data. When 80% of the dollars spent are on staff, 53% is a significant cut. Those dollars have names attached to them, and those names have families, and those people serve kids who are otherwise underserved in our school system.”

Steven is part of the 2020 Census grantee cohort, working together to help ensure that every resident of Pierce County is informed, engaged, and valued, especially under the ever-changing conditions of COVID-19. Due to the severe impacts of COVID-19 and the various increments of the stay-at-home order, organizations were forced to adjust their day-to-day operations and to pivot their current 2020 Census outreach efforts.

Members of the 2020 Census grantee cohort shared their revised strategies for census outreach and the importance of census participation to their communities.

TACOMA URBAN LEAGUE

T’wina Nobles, President and CEO, “our online efforts intensified and included a 2020 Census text messaging campaign. We must continue putting accurate information into the hands of our community members. Even with everything changing, we still have to remind folks to put energy behind the census.

“The census is important for representation, money, and power. We need funds in our community for infrastructure, education, and hospitals. We need an accurate count in order to serve our community, and that population is constantly changing.”

“It is important that funds are spent wisely in different areas that are always experiencing disparities. COVID-19 has exposed those disparities.”

OASIS YOUTH CENTER

“The need to connect was higher, so we pivoted to and modified our digital programming rather quickly”, explained Matthew Wilson, Executive Director of Oasis Youth Center. “We used text communications a lot more

and we got pretty good responses and feedback from our youth.

“Because we are meeting youth at the beginning stages of their life, incorporating the census education and outreach gets them learning about civic engagement and what happens after that. For example, having a discussion as to why there is no sexual orientation question on the census, and why that is. It gives them the opportunity to talk about what kind of work they can do as they become adults while learning how to be advocates for themselves and the community.”



Asia Pacific Cultural Center strongly encourages all members of their community to get involved with the census.

ASIAN PACIFIC CULTURAL CENTER (APCC)

“We continue to make phone calls, and we try to see them in small gatherings in the community. Right now, we are helping our community members complete the census online, over the phone. If we don’t, a lot won’t do it otherwise,” said Lua Pritchard, Executive Director of the Asian Pacific Cultural Center. “We really need to be counted! Our population is growing. Can you imagine how many are not counted?”

“It is important that funds are spent wisely in different areas that are always experiencing disparities. COVID-19 has exposed those disparities. Without the community-based organizations and the grassroots organizing, I don’t know how we would make it.”

“The census becomes even more critical to make sure that the needs of all kids, and not just kids from a white, middle-class, two-parent home, are met.”

WHITE RIVER SCHOOL DISTRICT

Steven Liefesen, Director of Equity and Achievement at White River School District, noted the obstacle of conducting outreach to families with only P.O. boxes, “we started working with Janece Levien, GTCF Senior Program Officer and created a strategy to distribute fliers to those people with P.O. Boxes. We also included materials through school lunch programs and local food banks, making sure there was no way people would go without hearing about the census in our community. The census is important because our school funding can fluctuate due to a census count, so we are unable to provide extra support services to students who are academically struggling in school without that funding.


“Prior to COVID-19, I didn’t fully understand the impact of the census, but it really hit home professionally this year when one of our grants was cut by 53% due to lack of census data. When 80% of the dollars spent are on staff, 53% is a significant cut. Those dollars have names attached to them, and those names have families, and those people serve kids who are otherwise underserved in our school system.”

BEATING 2010 SELF-RESPONSE IS ONLY THE BEGINNING

As of June 2020, Pierce County surpassed its 2010 self-response rate of 66.7%, but there is still more work to be done to make sure all communities are accurately counted.

[This video](#), produced by the University of Washington-Tacoma Center for Applied Urban Research, shows how just a 10% undercount can affect funding, business, and political representation. Climbing to a 100% response rate has a direct impact on the resources available to Pierce County.

Self-respond today and complete the 2020 Census online, [by phone](#), or [by mail](#).



Social Emotional Learning Helps Kids Navigate Covid-19 Disruptions

Sharing is usually something adults encourage kids to practice. That's why Tess Guerrero understood how strange it sounded when she explained to a student that they couldn't share their supplies because of safety measures due to COVID-19.

"I don't want to hear one more thing about this virus!" the student exclaimed.

Tess said the student's reaction exemplifies the difficult emotions young people are feeling right now. "You can see the impact on our kids...it's got to be such a confusing time for them.

"I feel like the SEL work is so important, especially during this time, to help students navigate through something like this, because it's a different kind of experience."

Tess is a dance teacher with Tacoma Arts Live. While schools across the state are operating remotely due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Tess is one of several local educators teaching at Emergency Day Camps for children of first responders, hospital staff, and other essential workers.

These Day Camps launched rapidly in late March as Tacoma Public Schools, GTCF, and numerous Tacoma Whole Child partners shifted their focus from aligning in-school and afterschool Social Emotional Learning to providing safe and reliable childcare for people on the front lines of the pandemic.

GTCF Senior Program Officer Fahren Johnson, explained how the work Whole Child partners have done in recent

years helped prepare them to support families in this crisis. "We've been doing Social Emotional Learning work for the last two years, so it's almost like we are primed for this time, right now."

Though they've had to adapt many aspects of their programs to comply with Department of Health guidelines, Whole Child partners have made an effort to continue emphasizing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) activities at the Day Camps to help support students.

"We didn't need to reinvent the wheel. It was just about looking at what we were already doing and asking, 'How can we do these things in a way that keeps everyone safe and doesn't have everyone touching things?'"

"I feel like the SEL work is so important, especially during this time, to help students navigate through something like this, because it's a different kind of experience," explained Venalin Aguilar, Whole Child Site Director. "Some of the students are there all day and the way the structure is set, they can't leave the room. Just being in there for that amount of time, not knowing what a day is going to look like, not knowing what a week is going to look like, the SEL work is really important in helping them express how they feel and not be so scared about it."

Kayla Davis, GTCF Program Manager says ensuring that adults working with the students are adequately prepared with the lesson plans, resources, and information they need, helps them pass along a sense of calm to the kids. "It's already a high anxiety space for the students because

of COVID-19 and all their parents being on the front lines of it. We want to make sure the adults working with them are prepared to support them in navigating those difficult emotions.”

In order to help Whole Child partners continue offering SEL-infused activities at the Day Camps while maintaining best public health practices, GTCF Senior Program Officer Megan Smedsrud developed a [COVID-19 SEL Toolkit](#). Megan’s tool kit included simple “hands-off” solutions for many of the signature SEL practices they normally use like: warm greetings for students, daily emotional check-ins and community circles. “We didn’t need to reinvent the wheel. It was just about looking at what we were already doing and asking, ‘How can we do these things in a way that keeps everyone safe and doesn’t have everyone touching things?’”

“if the students are having experiences that help them process what they’re feeling, or give them a chance to dive into something completely different where they can forget about the challenges they’re experiencing...that’s what meaningful looks like.”

Instead of a handshake or high-five at the door for a warm greeting, the toolkit offers ideas like giving each student a compliment as they enter, saying “hello” in different languages, or having a 5-second dance off. To create opportunities for daily emotion check-ins, the toolkit suggests a North, South, East, West activity, where each direction of the room represents an emotional zone where a student can stand to express how they are feeling.

Megan looked to evidence-based resources, such as [The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning](#) (CASEL) and the [National Association of School Psychologists](#), rather than including, as she says, “things that just feel good.”

Back at the Day Camp, dance teacher Tess Guerrero reflected on how she hopes the activities help her students. “It’s not going to be all roses, but if the students are having experiences that help them process what they’re feeling, or give them a chance to dive into something completely different where they can forget about the challenges they’re experiencing...that’s what meaningful looks like.”

SEL FOR EVERYONE DURING COVID-19

While the SEL activities in the toolkit were designed with kids at the Day Camps in mind, these suggestions from the [National Association of School Psychologists](#) can support anyone living and working with kids – as well as adults – during COVID-19.

HELPING STUDENTS REGULATE EMOTIONS

- Be a role model. Children will react to and follow your reactions. They learn from your example.
- Be aware of how you talk about COVID-19. Your discussion about COVID-19 can increase or decrease your child’s fear. Remind children that you are going to do everything within your power to keep them well and safe when they are with you. Carefully listen or have them draw or write out their thoughts and feelings and respond with truth and reassurance.
- Explain social distancing. Children probably don’t fully understand why parents/guardians aren’t allowing them to be with friends. Tell children that you are following the guidelines of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), which include social distancing. Social distancing means staying away from others until the risk of contracting COVID-19 is under control. Showing older children the “flatten the curve” charts will help them grasp the significance of social distancing. Explain that while we don’t know how long it will take to “flatten the curve” to reduce the number of those infected, we do know that this is a critical time—we must follow the guidelines of health experts to do our part.
- Demonstrate deep breathing. Deep breathing is a valuable tool for calming the nervous system. Do breathing exercises with children.
- Focus on the positive. Create masterpieces. Sing, laugh, and go outside, if possible, to connect with nature and get needed exercise.

REGULATING YOUR EMOTIONS

- Pay close attention to your own feelings of stress or anxiety.
- Practice continued self-care strategies, including eating healthy, getting enough sleep, exercising, and finding time to take breaks.
- If you find yourself overwhelmed by negative thoughts, find ways to reframe your thinking.
- Seek out needed mental health support for yourself or loved ones.
- Keep a regular sleep schedule. Sleep plays an essential role in mental and physical health!

The Tacoma Whole Child Partnership is a 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.