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*Pictured from left to right with ELC students: Amara Rietz, Sylvia Russ, DeeDee Dillon, Asa Tate, Thom Murray, Taylor Hoang, Venesa Swan, Bevette Ivis, Heather Fitzpatrick, Mo Malakoutian, Lexie Olson, Faye Green*

## Students and staff share appreciation at recent Amazon visit

After five years, Wellspring's Early Learning Center (ELC) was able to re-open an additional preschool classroom this fall thanks in large part to a generous gift from Amazon. The classroom had been closed due to funding and staffing shortages that are challenging early learning programs nationwide.

Wellspring ELC is the only licensed early learning program in Washington state specializing in serving the needs of children ages 1 – 5 facing or experiencing homelessness. Key features include a low 1:5 teacher-to-student ratio, Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Therapist and family support specialists, nutritious meals and weekly onsite health visits. Together these resources support a no-expulsion approach designed to purposefully disrupt the “school to prison pipeline” that has historically pushed youth of color out of schools and into the criminal justice system. The ELC addresses systemic inequities by removing barriers and helping children experiencing multiple layers of trauma succeed in kindergarten and beyond.

Amazon's grant reflects the company's



*Left to Right: Amazon's Head of Community Engagement, Seattle, Taylor Hoang; Wellspring CEO Heather Fitzpatrick; and ELC Teacher Sylvia Russ, with preschool students.*

commitment to access to education and building stronger communities where their employees live and work. It is just the latest example of the impact of the longtime partnership Wellspring has enjoyed with Amazon spanning corporate philanthropy, employee volunteerism, product donations, and employment programs to help families in crisis.

In November, Taylor Hoang, Amazon's Head of Community Engagement, Seattle, visited the ELC to see Amazon's donation at work. “At Amazon, we believe in the transformative power of education and the importance of early

learning to help children unlock their potential,” said Hoang. “Wellspring's Early Learning Center is providing essential preschool programming for our most vulnerable youths, and we are happy to support its continued growth.” Joining Hoang at the visit was Amazonian and Wellspring board member, Mo Malakoutian.

This vital funding couldn't come at a more critical time. The pandemic and rising inflation have made it even more challenging to find and keep teachers. In Washington state, for early learning programs to maintain their licenses, lead teachers are required to have AA degrees or higher in early childhood education or a Washington state teaching certificate.

According to Early Learning Center Director Venesa Swan, “It can be challenging to compete with higher paying jobs in the public schools and elsewhere. Thanks to Amazon's generosity and other private and public funding we can offer competitive wages and benefits coupled with recruitment and retention incentives that enable us to serve more children facing homelessness.”

## Upcoming Events



### Fresh Starts Drive | March 13 - April 14

New and expecting parents experiencing homelessness are in need of baby supplies. You can help provide items to comfort and support babies in their first year of life. Scan the QR Code →



### Lasting Change Campaign | April 28 - May 5

Please consider joining us online as a Lasting Change Champion to help prevent homelessness before it happens and intervene early when it does. For more information, please contact Harrison Jones, major gifts officer, at [hjones@wellspringfs.org](mailto:hjones@wellspringfs.org) or 206-826-3036



### Change Is Brewing Happy Hour | May 2, 5:30pm – 8pm

Join us at Chuck's Hop Shop (5041 Wilson Ave S, Seattle, WA 98118, located within Third Place Books) for a night of brews and games in support of families facing homelessness.

## Wellspring Book Club

*The Wellspring Book Club is an opportunity for our community to grow and learn together. Covering topics related to our goal of ending family homelessness for good and our values around diversity, equity, inclusion, and access. The Wellspring Book Club is a chance for our donors, staff, and supporters to come together and work toward a future where all people are healthy and housed.*

From groundbreaking speaker, writer, and entrepreneur Ruchika Tulshyan, Wellspring is proud to share *Inclusion on Purpose: An Intersectional Approach to Creating a Culture of Belonging at Work*; a book that we believe will become a must-read for leaders and influencers in our community.

Starting from the intersection of race and gender, *Inclusion on Purpose* builds a practical framework that empowers readers to work toward Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access ("DEIA"). Tulshyan stresses that awareness, intention, and regular practice are the keys for building healthy relational ecosystems. Through this lens, DEIA becomes more than a one-time cultural overhaul. Instead, DEIA becomes part of a growth mindset that generates value in the community and the workplace by fostering environments where people are safe to be their whole and authentic selves.

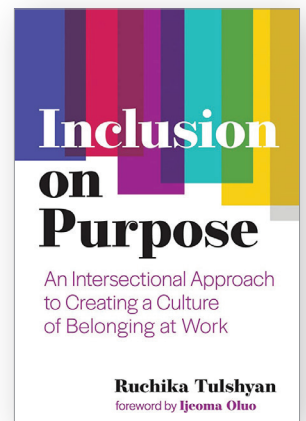
Tulshyan's suggestion that thinking about race and gender is the right starting place for creating healthy culture is doubly impactful

**"The work of inclusion – of our very behaviors creating belonging, trust, and a warm welcome – has never been more crucial. To advance as an organization, as well as a community, we must learn how to practice the fine arts of hospitality and inclusion."**

**- Peter Drury, Chief Strategy Officer**

for us at Wellspring, as the families we serve represent a diversity of cultures and family structures. In our context, inclusion isn't just a buzzword or strategy to increase employee satisfaction; it's an approach to service that dignifies and honors the experience of every individual and family we meet.

Grab a copy today, share questions and thoughts with us online using the #WellConnected hashtag, and join us as we learn and lead together.



**Inclusion on Purpose: An Intersectional Approach to Creating a Culture of Belonging at Work**  
by Ruchika Tulshyan,  
(MIT Press)

## What Will Your Legacy Be?

As you reflect on the legacy you will leave behind, there are many ways you can preserve your estate for your family and continue building strong communities.

From bequests in wills and trusts or naming Wellspring Family Services as a beneficiary on an insurance policy or retirement account (IRA or 401K), your

attorney or financial advisor can help you craft plans that take care of your family, while also extending your community impact beyond your lifetime. Wellspring's Tax ID # is 91-0567261.

Please contact Asa Tate, Wellspring's chief development officer, and Leave 10 board member to learn more at **206-902-4231** or [atate@wellspringfs.org](mailto:atate@wellspringfs.org). Thank you!



Leave 10 is a movement to educate, encourage and inspire people to leave at least 10% of their estate to non-profit organizations. You can get started by visiting [Leave10.org](https://Leave10.org).

## Volunteer Highlight - Franklin High School

### A decade of working with Franklin High School students: Awesome, Amazing, and Unique

Over ten years ago, Matt Carter, special education teacher at Franklin High School, was looking for opportunities for his students to serve the community while gaining valuable life skills. Visits to the Wellspring Family Store created a perfect match.

"Ten years ago when I was allowed to run this program, I looked around for community partners that were within transit distance from Franklin, would give them usable job skills, and with organizations that also served our larger community. [I bring students to volunteer] to see that even with disabilities, they are still able to give back to the community while at the same time building a repertoire of career skills to help them in the future." – Mr. Carter, reflecting on the volunteer program.

Mr. Carter describes his students as "awesome, amazing, and unique", we could not agree more. Twice a week Mr. Carter brings students to the Wellspring building to sort books, clothing, toys, and shoes to be distributed through the Family Store. These items will be packed into orders and picked up by families experiencing, or at risk of experiencing homelessness. Each student brings their full self and passions to their volunteer service. They carefully select items that families will be happy to receive in their shopping orders. This inventory process is a learning opportunity for both volunteers and staff, as students gain exposure to real world

work environments, and staff adapt opportunities to fit each student's ability.

Mr. Carter's students choose their own path in life, whether it's higher education, a career path, or finding ways to be involved in the community that align with their skill sets. Since 2012, with a brief hiatus due to COVID and online learning, Mr. Carter has helped students make their mark on the Wellspring community and the families we serve. Every small act of service has a ripple in the community, and a decade of these acts has amounted to waves. The first students Mr. Carter brought to Wellspring as part of their special education curriculum are well into adulthood.

What is most impactful about Franklin volunteers may be the enthusiasm, commitment, and energy they bring to volunteer projects. With a little guidance from Mr. Carter, his students match shoes and comment on what is in fashion, sort books by reading level and

reflect on the stories they loved in their childhood, and share fun facts from their classes with Wellspring staff.



"Every time there is a change of staff that works with us, it does not impact the fidelity of the program at all." – Mr. Carter, reflecting on how Wellspring has changed over time.

Mr. Carter has been involved with Wellspring for longer than many employees. It is the shared commitment to supporting families in this community that has sustained this partnership and welcomes new students every year. Reflecting on all that has been accomplished in that time, the future is brighter for families facing homelessness in our community, with the help of dedicated partners like Mr. Carter and his students.

Wellspring is grateful for the opportunity to work with Franklin students, the joy they bring to volunteering, and everything Mr. Carter does to end family homelessness for good.

1900 Rainier Avenue South  
Seattle, WA 98144



## Easy Ways to Make an Impact Today



### The Gift That Keeps Giving

Become a monthly donor! Recurring donations create a sustainable source of funding. Gifts of all sizes are welcomed and appreciated. It's easy to sign-up online at [give.wellspringfs.org/donations](https://give.wellspringfs.org/donations) or by contacting us.



### Donate Your Vehicle or Boat

Did you know that your unused vehicle or boat can be turned into a donation that helps families experiencing homelessness achieve stability? Get started today by visiting: [www.donateforcharity.com/nonprofit/wellspring-family-services](https://www.donateforcharity.com/nonprofit/wellspring-family-services)



For more information about the ways to give above, and many more, please contact us at

[donate@wellspringfs.org](mailto:donate@wellspringfs.org) or  
**206-787-8007.**

**Thank you for being part of our family!**



## Become a Lasting Change Champion

Please consider joining us online as a Lasting Change Champion to raise support for families facing homelessness. For more information, please contact Harrison Jones, major gifts officer at [hjones@wellspringfs.org](mailto:hjones@wellspringfs.org) or **206-826-3036**.

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