

2023

IMPACT

Created Together

From our CEO

As one of our region's oldest nonprofit organizations, we maintain our relevance through constant innovation, advocacy, and evolution to meet the needs of our community, 2023 was no exception.

INNOVATION TO END HOMELESSNESS

After four years of research and investment, Wellspring launched our newest program, the Wellspring Employee Stability Program, in late 2023. Most families experiencing homelessness are employed, and most people who are employed are ineligible for government benefits. We designed this innovative program to meet the needs of families who are employed and struggling.

[Click here to learn more about ESP and register for an informational webinar.](#)

ADVOCACY TO IMPROVE SUSTAINABILITY

Like most human service organizations, most of Wellspring's family services are funded by government contracts. Unfortunately, these contracts rarely cover the full cost of delivering services. Wellspring is proud to be a leading advocate in efforts to reform contract law in Washington State to improve the sustainability of our sector. We are thrilled to have made progress this legislative season with help from the Governor's Office, Senator Frame, and Representative Cortes.

[Click here to read about our efforts and sign our letter of support.](#)

EVOLUTION TO MEET COMMUNITY NEEDS

The number of families experiencing homelessness has grown dramatically as the cost of living in our region – and across our country – has increased. Our Family Store model has evolved to support that growing demand, delivering 80% growth, year over year, for the past several years with just 1 ½ paid staff members! I am grateful to the volunteers who power this program, and the generous donors who provide us with the children's clothing and other items we deliver. You can help us serve children in need by hosting a drive for essentials.

[Click here to view a list of the Family Store's most needed items.](#)

Thank you for your continued support, volunteerism, and commitment to helping us end homelessness for good.



Heather Fitzpatrick
Chief Executive Officer

Letter from the Board Chair

At Wellspring, the mission goes beyond statistics, we now proudly share; it's about transforming lives.

We firmly believe in the power of prevention to create lasting change. By intervening before families face the prospect of homelessness, we not only mitigate immediate challenges but also break the cycle for future generations. Through targeted initiatives and proactive measures, we provided vital support to families at risk, enabling them to maintain stable housing and pursue brighter futures.

Looking forward, our dedication to prevention remains steadfast. Despite evolving challenges, we are resolute in our pursuit of a community where every child has access to a stable and secure home. Together, we will continue to advocate for innovative solutions that prioritize prevention, recognizing their indispensable role in strengthening our entire community.

I extend heartfelt appreciation to our board members, dedicated Wellspring team, volunteers, donors, and invaluable community partners. It is through your unwavering support and collaboration that we achieved significant milestones in 2023, positively impacting the lives of families in our community.

Michaela Kay
Board Chair, 2023-2025

Family Store

The free Wellspring Family Store continues to be a valuable and important service available to families in our community. It stands out as a celebrated program at Wellspring, boasting a remarkably low barrier for families to access the support they need. Last year the store saw an 18% surge in requests for essential items, marking a staggering 286% increase in demand since 2020.

For years the store has focused on providing essentials for children, from diapers and wipes to clothing and footwear. Moreover, it goes beyond the basics by offering items that aid parents in nurturing their children's development, including toys, games, and books. Additionally, families can rely on the store for hygiene products.

The Wellspring Family Store is an invaluable lifeline for families, ensuring financial relief from having to purchase items that might otherwise be deemed low priority or unobtainable. Parents should never have to choose between clothing and rent, diapers, or food. Likewise, no child should go without toys, books or a warm winter coat. The store proudly assisted 2,353 families in 2023, thanks to the generous support of donors who gave new, and gently loved products, as well as financial support. Volunteers remain the driving force behind the store, ensuring Wellspring families receive the assistance they require when placing an order. The Family Store epitomizes community effort in its purest form!

In 2023

2,353
families were served,

8,804
shopping trips were
completed, and

844,053 diapers were
distributed.

A Message from the Wellspring Associate Board Chair

As the 2023 chair of the Wellspring Associate Board (WAB), it has been my pleasure to witness our members grow and thrive. Both in number of members and in engagement. We have strived to create opportunities for our members to support the Wellspring mission to prevent and end the cycle of family homelessness.

In 2023, we added a significant number of new members, bringing a wealth of new perspectives and experiences to the Associate Board. Our members are driving new initiatives and processes through their individual interests and specialties. WAB members are particularly enthusiastic about volunteering with Wellspring and luckily have ample opportunities to do so! Dedicated members have established regular WAB presence at nearly every Wellspring event, including the Family Resource Fairs, Advocacy Day, cleaning the ELC playground, and the various Family Store volunteer days. For many of our members (myself included) these



opportunities are a valued physical manifestation of the effort and desire to “do good” in our communities.

In addition to supporting existing Wellspring initiatives including drives, fundraisers, and events, the WAB tries to find new and creative ways to support. “Change is Brewing” is a prime example of an idea born from WAB involvement. Partnering with various breweries in our community, the WAB hosts fundraising events on location raising individual

donations while also receiving donations on a percentage of sales.

It's a fun event that goes beyond fundraising efforts and brings together Wellspring leaders and the community at large. This year was our most ambitious yet, doubling the number of events from a biannual occurrence to quarterly and raising over \$12,000 from this series alone.

For me, this past year as the chair was a wonderful experience. I've loved being part of, and witnessing, all the amazing work. My favorite experience is witnessing the transformation from initially conversing with a stranger about the WAB to later seeing them months down the line as a member, enthusiastically explaining the WAB to another curious stranger. I am so proud of our group and can't wait to see in which ways we'll grow in 2024!

Kelsie Bartolome
2023 Associate Board Chair

Housing

There is no one solution that fits every family that walks through our doors. At Wellspring, our staff embrace this diversity and accompany each family on their journey towards stability. Below is a story shared by a Wellspring Case Manager, illustrating the varied and tailored support provided to every family.

In 2023

522

families were served,

11

tenant education courses were offered to the community, and

403

families were redirected from shelters to housing.

“

I embarked on a journey with a resilient single mother facing the challenge of homelessness and desperately yearning to reunite with her two precious children. As her Case Manager, I knew that her success story would be one of determination, courage, and community support.

Our first encounter was filled with hope and desperation. With a heavy heart, she shared her story, emphasizing the desire to provide a stable home for her children. The pivotal moment arrived when we successfully referred her to the King County Housing Authority family reunification program. Seeing her emotions as she received news of securing housing was unforgettable – a mix of relief and anticipation for the road ahead.

The journey didn't end with securing housing; it was merely the foundation for what was to come. We recognized the importance of sustainable employment for her long-term stability. Connecting her to the Eastside Employment program through YMCA was a crucial



step. It was heartening to witness her growth, as she gained new skills and ultimately secured a job that not only brought financial security but also a renewed sense of purpose.

The real triumph came when the mother, through sheer determination, regained custody of her children. Their tearful reunion was a testament to the power of resilience and community support.

Acknowledging the significance of her personal growth, she graduated from mandated parenting classes, reflecting her commitment to creating a nurturing and supportive environment for her family. To further strengthen her family bonds, I referred her to family counseling support. The sessions became a safe space for them to communicate, understand each other's needs, and build a foundation of love and trust.

To further enhance their overall well-being, I assisted

in finding a primary family doctor for the family. Access to healthcare became a cornerstone in ensuring the family's physical and emotional health. This step emphasized our holistic approach to their journey, addressing not only immediate needs but also fostering long-term well-being.

Over the next six months, my role shifted to providing coaching and assistance, navigating challenges, including rental subsidies that gradually empowered her to take over her entire rent payment. Through this process, she blossomed into a self-sufficient, stable mother who was not only providing a home for her children but embodying the strength of a transformed life.

Being a part of her journey from homelessness to stability was an honor. It reinforced the importance of compassionate, community-driven interventions and the incredible impact we can make when uniting to uplift those in need. This success story isn't just about one individual; it's a testament to the power of support, resilience, and the transformative journey that unfolds when a community rallies behind someone determined to rewrite their story. ”

Early Learning Center

In 2023

50

children attended the ELC,

42

families participated in the ELC,

11

students graduated ready for Kindergarten.

We firmly believe every child deserves a childhood full of joy, exploration, and the chance to thrive. Our Early Learning Center (ELC) provides a safe, nurturing space where children facing trauma and homelessness are free to be kids, while preparing for their bright futures. Our culturally responsive approach prioritizes trauma-informed care and supports children holistically as they improve foundational developmental skills, build trusting relationships, and prepare for success in kindergarten and life.

Every experience during early childhood matters. Children learn and develop resilience for life when their experiences are consistent, emotionally supportive, and developmentally appropriate. However, for children who continuously face trauma and instability, a lack of adequate early support may hinder their ability to achieve success in academic and social environments, starting as early as kindergarten.

In 2023, only 31.9% of children experiencing homelessness in Washington State entered school ready for kindergarten, in stark contrast to 53.1% of housed children. Wellspring's ELC provides a nurturing environment focused on trauma-informed care. By prioritizing emotional support and developmental growth, we help children build the foundation they need to succeed. In 2023, 92% of the children attending Wellspring's ELC gained at least ten new developmental skills during their stay in the program.

Our commitment to the children in the ELC goes beyond academics. Trauma challenges people's idea that the world is a safe place, fostering feelings of insecurity and mistrust. To begin to heal, families need to feel secure. For children, primary caregivers frequently provide this sense of safety. However, when the whole family has been impacted by trauma, children may need support from others. ELC classrooms are safe spaces where children can heal,

flourish, and be supported by dedicated staff who receive specialized training to address the unique needs of children with trauma histories.

Along with specialized training, the ELC upholds a no-expulsion policy and intentionally low student-to-teacher ratios, ensuring the support students deserve. In our toddler-age classrooms, there is one teacher for every four students, while classrooms catering to older children maintain a ratio of one teacher for every five students. Rather than resorting to expulsion if challenging behaviors arise, we have integrated an Infant Early Childhood Mental Health Therapist into the ELC team to collaborate with both children and teachers to address issues in real-time. This practice purposefully disrupts the "school-to-prison pipeline" that has historically pushed youth of color out of schools and into the criminal justice system.

In helping children meet their basic survival needs and begin to heal from homelessness, teachers support the children to feel free to be kids. For instance, they prioritize play-based learning activities to cultivate creativity, imagination, and social interaction. There is also emphasis placed on building trusting relationships between children, caregivers, and peers to foster a sense of connective belonging. All practices are highly inclusive and flexible to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities, ensuring that every child feels valued.

In essence, the ELC celebrates the unique strengths, interests, and talents of each child, creating a supportive environment where they can explore their passions and express themselves freely.



Wellspring Employee Assistance Program

In 2023

117,269

lives were covered,

253

employers utilized our EAP services, and

4,156

employees used our EAP services.

In 2023, the Wellspring EAP was offered by 250+ employers to approximately 100,000 employees in Washington State and beyond. We introduced a new small group product for employers with fewer than 50 employees and we continued to build out our Learning & Development offerings which have been well received by our customers.

The Employee Stability Program (ESP) is ready for participants! In late 2023 we began offering bi-monthly webinars for employers and benefit brokers to learn about this new program which offers financial coaching and referral services to employees experiencing financial instability. If you, or an employer you know, are interested in learning more about this innovative new program, you can read more on the Wellspringfs.org website.

The EAP and the ESP continue to be critical offerings in service of Wellspring's mission of ending homelessness for families and employees. We are always happy to talk with anyone who is interested in learning more!

[Click here to learn more about how Wellspring EAP supports employees](#)

2023

EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

JANUARY

Legislative Advocacy Day
State Capital - *Olympia*

MAY

Change Is Brewing
Chuck's Hop Shop - *Seward Park, Seattle*

JUNE

Summer Family Resource Fair
Early Learning Center Graduation
Wellspring Family Services - *Mt. Baker, Seattle*

JULY

Change Is Brewing
Stoup Brewing - *Capitol Hill, Seattle*

AUGUST

Back to School Family Resource Fair
Wellspring Family Services - *Mt. Baker, Seattle*

OCTOBER

Change Is Brewing
Old Stove Brewing Company - *Ship Canal, Seattle*

DECEMBER

Change Is Brewing
Reuben's Brews - *Ballard, Seattle*

Giving Together Family Gift Drive
Wellspring Family Services - *Mt. Baker, Seattle*

Volunteers

With gratitude we share that an unprecedented number of folks showcased their commitment to preventing and ending family homelessness in our community by volunteering at Wellspring. Volunteers are the very heartbeat and hands that drive our mission forward, transforming grand visions into tangible realities for those in need.

From compassionate folks who rally their family, coworkers, sports teams, and entire communities to stand alongside them in championing the causes they hold dear, to the talented individuals who generously contribute countless hours to input data, bolster our capacity, and even adorn our spaces with fresh paint - each of you embodies the essence of volunteerism that propels our mission forward.

On behalf of our dedicated staff and, most importantly, the program participants whose lives you touch, we extend our deepest gratitude for your service.

In 2023

1078

volunteers

gave

2270

hours

including over

65

groups.

Volunteer Spotlight: Darrell Park

In the bustling heart of our community, amidst the everyday rush, lies a remarkable individual whose commitment to service shines brightly. Meet Darrell Park, whose dedication to volunteering has touched the lives of countless families in need. With over 130 hours of selfless service under his belt, Darrell's commitment to preventing and ending family homelessness is nothing short of inspiring.

"I wanted to volunteer for Wellspring specifically because I experienced homelessness as a teenager. I was blessed enough to be taken in by my best friend's family, but most people are not as fortunate as I was."

- Darrell Park, Volunteer

Having once faced the harsh realities of homelessness, Darrell found solace and support in the kindness of others.

It's this profound empathy that led him to choose Wellspring. His contributions have a huge impact to ensure that others don't face the same challenges he once did.

His volunteer tasks are as diverse as they are impactful. From packing essential items

like diapers and clothing for families in the Family Store, to utilizing his skills with database management and donation tracking, to ensuring events are fun and successful, every day holds a new opportunity.

"I truly believe that people, and especially children, should have an opportunity to succeed and live a happy life. Examining the data reveals that experiencing homelessness and its associated indicators significantly diminishes the likelihood of achieving success and leading a fulfilling life." - Darrell

Among his many volunteer experiences, Darrell fondly recalls attending Wellspring's donor event— meeting new people and savoring delicious food, while raising critical funds for a mission near to his heart. Reflecting on his journey, Darrell emphasizes that Wellspring is a community that nurtures personal

growth and development. He encourages others to join in this journey of service, knowing firsthand the profound impact it can have, both on those served and on volunteers themselves.



"One of my favorite parts about Wellspring is that you can work on so many different things if you just ask. For example, I originally started in the Family Store and expanded into the Fundraising Operations team, acquiring skills that I will use throughout my career." - Darrell

Balancing volunteer commitments alongside a full-time job presents its challenges, but Darrell's determination knows no bounds. With the support of his employer, HomeStreet Bank, he navigates dual roles, never losing sight of the mission to serve others.

As we celebrate Darrell's remarkable dedication to serving families facing homelessness in our community, let us be inspired by his example: embracing the spirit of service, and creating positive change in our communities.

It takes a community...

The work we do for families in our community is made possible by the dedicated commitment of every donor. As an organization we are fortunate to receive support from several thousand donors annually, who generously assist their neighbors through both cash donations and contributions of essential items. While we cannot list each donor individually due to the sheer number, we express our sincere gratitude to all you for your invaluable support.

Sincerely,



Troy Coalman
Sr. Director of Donor Impact



Thom Murray
Director of Corporate and Foundation Relations

Special thank you to the following Corporate & Institutional Donors:

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Thank You to our individual premier level donors:

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Patrick Rossol-Allison • Joseph & Judy Sambataro • Dave X. Sampson • Christy & Brian Smith
Dave & Chris Towne • Stuart & Lucy Williams

1892 Legacy Circle Members

Thank you to members of our community who have included Wellspring in their estate plans, helping create a sustainable future for our neighbors:

Christopher M. Alston • Estate of Linda Brownstein & Eric Drucker* • Vicki and Judy Burr-Chellin • Troy P. Coalman
Nancy Cochran • Kristin E. Curley • Judith Cushman • Estate of Thomas M. Dannenfelter*
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Estate of Patricia L. Scanlon • Irene Shigaki • Estate of Cam D. Wong* • Russ Young & Shyla Miller

*Indicates deceased.

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