



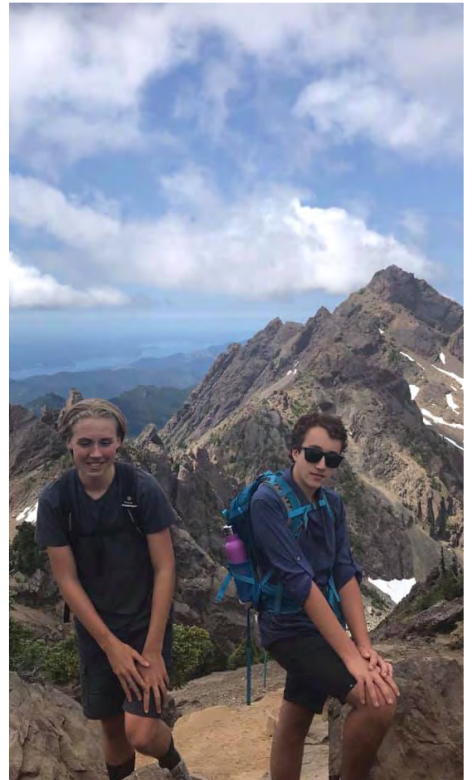
THE RUSSELL FAMILY FOUNDATION



2021



YEAR  
IN REVIEW





Partners, Colleagues and Friends,

While 2021 offered more reasons to hope for the future, we continued to face setbacks and frustration as our community and country endured a new chapter in the global COVID-19 pandemic. However, these struggles gave way to moments of strength, growth and reflection that carried us through despite the challenging circumstances. At The Russell Family Foundation, we witnessed our partners overcome obstacles with determination and grace to continue their critical work to meet the ever-evolving needs of our communities.

In fact, there are many wins in 2021 to celebrate. TRFF's environmental education grantee Great Peninsula Conservancy launched their Land Labs program to engage students in outdoor conservancy and a group of fifth-graders restored nearly 4,300 square feet of land. Wild Society continued to connect communities to nature through outdoor explorations along the Columbia River, in Olympic National Park and beyond. The Jane's Fellowship Program launched its Class 9 made up of 13 fellows who will follow a curriculum grounded in social equity values.

In addition to our grant making, we collaborated with our partners, One Pierce Community Resiliency Fund, Greater Tacoma Community Foundation and local funders, to provide a zero-interest loan pool to support the use of federal COVID-19 relief funding in Pierce County. A 2019 loan guarantee to Forterra and Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group resulted in the conservation of a 297-acre estuary at Big Beef Creek, WA, and we were able to provide a loan fund to Business Impact Northwest coupled with grant capital to provide small business loans and technical assistance to support entrepreneurs.

The year also offered opportunities for changes within the Foundation, as TRFF began transitioning 50% of its assets to some family members who will independently pursue other philanthropic endeavors. This transition prompted the decision to sunset the Puget Sound and Jane's Fund programs, two programs that have supported grantees striving to protect and restore the Puget Sound and build brighter futures for youth in Pierce County. There have been incredible achievements and milestones along the way, and we are honored to have worked alongside a diverse group of community partners on these efforts for the past 20+ years. TRFF has also culminated support for the Puyallup Watershed Initiative, and is proud to have exceeded our initial commitment of \$10 million and for all the work the Initiative has achieved. A new path forward for TRFF continues to be shaped, including how we learn, hold ourselves accountable, support our partners and lead with values of relationship and transparency.

In this ever-changing environment, I continue to be inspired by the ongoing commitment of our staff, board members and family in service of our mission to contribute to a sustainable and peaceful world for people, places, and communities. We express our deepest appreciation to our grantees and community partners as we continue our learning and evolution.

In gratitude,

**Kathleen Simpson, CPA, CGMA**  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Russell Family Foundation



# PUGET SOUND

For over 20 years, The Russell Family Foundation partnered with local organizations that protect and restore the waters of Puget Sound and contribute to long-term environmental sustainability and positive social impacts for our estuary and communities in our region. Thank you to our grantees for their efforts to support our communities, we are honored to have supported your missions to protect the Puget Sound. Our grantee partners and 2021 grants are briefly described below.

**American Rivers** implements critical work for water quality in Puget Sound including work around dams, infrastructure to prevent unnecessary fish kills, restoration work in the Green Duwamish watershed, leadership roles in floodplain restoration and management in the Puyallup/White watershed.



*"Rivers are essential to all life and thanks to the generosity of The Russell Family Foundation, American Rivers has been able to increase equitable floodplain management policies and practices within the Puget Sound and across Washington state. We have been able to provide support to multiple community groups and tribes advancing restoration projects in areas plagued by historic underinvestment and established lasting change at places like Roxhill Bog and the Green Duwamish River. We are now able to expand our impact to serve more people across the state and none of this work would have been possible without The Russell Family Foundation."*

**- Brandon Parsons,  
Associate Director, American Rivers**

**Audubon Washington's** team is implementing their recently created Puget Sound Blueprint using a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) mapping support tool to advance key policies critical to Puget Sound's resilience and recovery.

**Deschutes Estuary Restoration Team** is working to monitor water quality and pollution, and develop a map that identifies pollution sources, restoration opportunities, and nutrient reduction strategies in the South Puget Sound.

**ECOSS** works directly with municipalities, businesses, neighborhoods, and individuals to drive environmentally sustainable solutions through their Clean Water Program that addresses pollution prevention, storm water management, environmental justice, and permit compliance.

**Forterra**, in partnership with the Pierce Conservation District and Pierce County Agricultural Roundtable, is working to protect critical agricultural farmland in the Puyallup Watershed.

**National Wildlife Federation** is empowering volunteers in Pierce County to improve water conservation and create habitat corridors using their Habitat Steward program.

**Northwest Straits Marine Conservation Foundation** is advancing key conservation projects that are supporting healthy habitats and clean water work in the North Puget Sound region to strengthen their volunteer base through training and field opportunities, and forge additional partnerships through their Marine Fellows, internships and related programs.

**Oceans Initiative's Ocean Noise Program** helps speed up data analysis, specifically ocean noise, which is one of the major issues facing Puget Sound marine life.

**Puget Soundkeeper Alliance's** work is focused on reversing the decline in Puget Sound water quality by obtaining improved pollution discharge permits and other water quality regulations, increasing compliance, and engaging community members to build support for strong policies and enforcement.

**RE Sources for Sustainable Communities** spearheads state and local efforts to protect and restore the marine and fresh waters of Northern Puget Sound.

**Na'ah Illahee Fund** leads the **Salish Sea Collective's** work, which is comprised of more than 20 environmental and grassroots organizations collaborating to develop community habitat district councils that will develop research tools to be included in the Environmental Health Disparities map addressing issues of toxic waste, community engagement, access, and stewardship.



*"In 2021, Salish Sea Collective conducted a series of meetings, interviews and research that has helped the Collective in understanding how cultural histories, environmental justice concerns, and livelihood strategies can shape actions and policy for a thriving Salish Sea. Over 70 community-based organizations have been identified and mapped in an ongoing basin-wide engagement effort. The Collective advocated for the HEAL Act, participated in the EJ Task Force, met with leadership from the Department of Ecology and the Puget Sound Partnership and the Environmental Protection Agency for Region 10 resulting in ongoing strategic partnerships with regular monthly engagements as we head into 2022. Our hands are raised in gratitude to the people at The Russell Family Foundation for lifting up this effort over the past year and helping us succeed in a very challenging time. Thank you!"*

**- Bridget Ray, Director, Salish Sea Collective**

**Stewardship Partners** involves and engages in committees and collectives to provide guidance on recovery policies and infuse them with collaboration and equity values across the Puget Sound region.

**The Nature Conservancy** is working to develop a scientifically rigorous performance measure for water quality that will include multiple partners and will help leverage private and public funding for multi-benefit project implementation.

**The Trust For Public Land** is working in partnership with Metro Parks Tacoma and Tacoma Public School District to build five green schoolyards in Southeast Tacoma that will act as neighborhood parks outside of school hours and include green infrastructure elements.

**Washington Association of Land Trusts** is working to engage with key stakeholders to improve and connect State funding programs to opportunities for conservation projects that will protect Puget Sound's salmon recovery, water quality, water supply and marine ecosystems.



*"In our niche of private land conservation, big shiny successes often rest on years of behind-the-scenes efforts that rarely make headlines. The Russell Family Foundation recognizes this, and has been a tremendous partner in giving us the backbone to diving into sticky policy issues with non-traditional partners, and to examine new ways of supporting large-scale watershed protection for Puget Sound recovery. This support is catalyzing a new financing model that, if successful, will bring tens of millions in new dollars to safeguard the region's forests, rivers, and salmon"*

**- Nick Norton, Executive Director, Washington Associate of Land Trusts**



**Washington Environmental Council's** Puget Sound recovery work is focused on building public support and engagement, protecting and improving water quality by partnering with the Dept. of Ecology and other Puget Sound recovery NGOs; and by influencing policy change that promotes healthier shorelines and salmon habitat and shifting the approach to land use planning.

**Western Environmental Law Center's** legal team is working to compel the Environmental Protection Agency and the Washington Department of Ecology to comply with the federal Clean Water Act.

## JANE'S FUND

The Jane's Fund grant making program was established to honor the legacy of Jane Russell and her volunteerism in Pierce County. Historically, education grants have supported organizations serving underrepresented students as they pursue college and degree completion. Jane's Fund youth homelessness grants have supported prevention programs to address youth and young adult homelessness. We are grateful for the important work of our grantee partners, especially as they managed significant disruption to their programming in 2021 and adapted quickly to support the well-being and stability of the young people they serve. Our grantee partners and 2021 grants are briefly described below.

**College Success Foundation** works to disrupt the intergenerational cycle of poverty and provide a unique integrated system of support and scholarships to inspire under served, low-income students to finish high school, graduate from college, and succeed in life.

**Degrees of Change** prepares diverse, homegrown leaders to succeed in college and use their degrees to build more vibrant and equitable communities. Programs gather students into community cohorts, supporting their transition to, persistence in and graduation from college, while intentionally supporting their development as leaders and their transition from college to the workforce.

**Comprehensive Life Resources** is the fiscal sponsor for the Pierce County Youth and Young Adult Homelessness Campaign, which aims to coordinate efforts across organizations addressing youth and young adult homelessness, raise resources and advocate for systems-level changes for young people in Pierce County experiencing homelessness.



*"This project has been uniquely positioned to provide systems-level advocacy because of our flexible philanthropic funding. We have already been able to partner with both the city and the county on prioritizing funding for Youth & Young Adult housing programs. Having great partners like TRFF has also given the campaign legitimacy amongst both providers and our young adult partners."*

**- Rodney Robinson, Director,  
Pierce County Youth and Young Adult  
Homelessness Campaign**



**Hilltop Artists** is a youth development program with a focus on glass making that uses glass art to connect young people from diverse cultural and economic backgrounds to better futures.

**A Way Home Washington**, fiscally sponsored by TSNE Mission Works, works to prevent and end youth and young adult homelessness and address the disproportionate amount of young people of color and those who identify as LGBTQ+ that are experiencing homelessness.

**Reach Center**, fiscally sponsored by Tacoma Community House, plays a critical role as a hub for youth and young adult homelessness work in Pierce County, providing rapid rehousing, social service referrals, job and life skills training, and flexible case management.

**Lea Armstrong Scholarship Fund**, sponsored by Greater Tacoma Community Foundation, provides scholarships to people who are single parents with children at home, to address financial barriers while in pursuit of higher education at a community, technical, or four-year higher education.

### **R. Merle Palmer Minority Scholarship**

**(aka Palmer Scholars)** is committed to supporting underrepresented Pierce County students of color to overcome financial, cultural, and social barriers in their pursuit of higher education.

*"Support from The Russell Family Foundation has been integral to our ability to provide high quality wrap-around services to our Scholars, and to be responsive to additional needs that have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Over the last year we have served roughly 200 Scholars through our Legacy and Pathways programs, and we also launched an online mentoring platform, Palmer Connections, to expand our services to even more youth and young adults across the County. Thanks to the generous support provided by TRFF, our Scholars are continuing to meet and exceed the performance measurements we set before the beginning of the pandemic, including 100% of our high school Scholars graduating on time, 94% of college freshmen persisting to their second year, and 90% of Scholars took \$5,000 or less in student loans. We have also maintained our all-time postsecondary graduation rate of 85%."*

**- Jonathan Jackson,  
Executive Director, Palmer Scholars**



**Foundation for Tacoma Students** manages the Tacoma Completes Initiative which is working toward a comprehensive, coordinated community-wide system helping all Tacoma Public School college-goers to persist through college to graduation.

**Coffee Oasis** provides street and school outreach, drop-in resource centers, intensive case management, housing, crisis intervention and job training to runaway, street, and homeless youth.

## 2021 BY THE NUMBERS

JANE'S FUND

**10 GRANTS**

TOTALING

**\$380,000**

GEORGE F. RUSSELL JR. FUND

**9 GRANTS**

TOTALING

**\$230,000**

JANE'S  
FELLOWSHIP

**13  
STIPEND  
GRANTS**

TOTALING

**\$110,500**

THE PUYALLUP  
WATERSHED  
INITIATIVE GRANT

**\$600,000**

ENVIRONMENTAL  
EDUCATION GRANTS

**26 GRANTS**

TOTALING

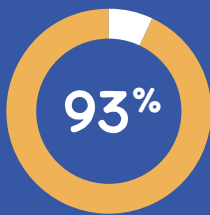
**\$700,000**

PUGET SOUND

**13 GRANTS**

TOTALING

**\$1,090,000**



VALUES ALIGNED

TOTAL VALUES ALIGNED INVESTMENTS

**\$92,108,105**

# COMMUNITY IMPACT



## ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION

### Creating access to outdoor education and engaging the next generation of environmental stewards.

Environmental education providers suffered many impacts of the global pandemic in 2020 which carried over to 2021. Despite the circumstances, none of TRFF's grantees closed their doors completely. Many of them received PPP loans that were forgiven and some used the time to innovate and develop new programming opportunities adjusting to the different county by county restrictions.

The Community Boat Project is a great example of an organization with high demand for its programs. As stated on their Facebook page, "Cold weather does not stop us!" The Voyagers have learned about temperature-related emergencies (heatstroke, hypothermia and cold water immersion) and have practiced crew overboard drills with their special crew dummy, Woody. Rain or shine, these young people make the best of what the Community Boat Project has to offer. Their Voyagers program has had a wait list since July 2021 and they have been able to keep their doors open following all COVID protocols.

*"This past year our focus at the Community Boat Project was 'Connections'. Everyone was desperate to stay connected in-person, especially teens in that critical point in their development. We ran more outdoor, adventure, and environmental programs than ever. We tried new things. The gratitude from youth and parents was overwhelming. And it was all possible because the Russell Family Foundation funded it. In years to come, let it be said, 'That was our best year.'"*

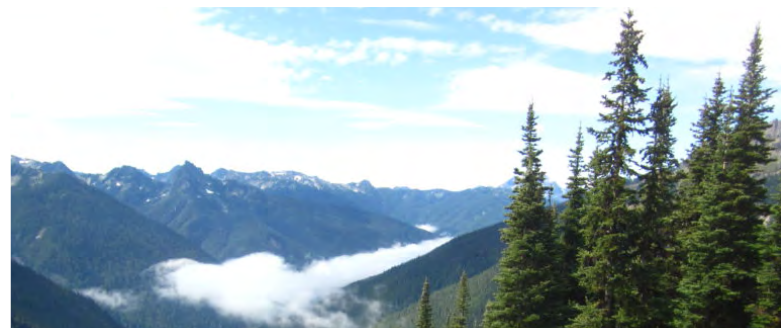
**- Wayne Chimenti, Director, Community Boat Project**

## CAPACITY BUILDING

### Strategic Storytelling for Social Change

The Russell Family Foundation, in partnership with the National Recreation Foundation, offered their Environmental Education grantees the opportunity to participate in a "Strategic Storytelling for Social Change" workshop facilitated by Seven November, a consulting firm that provides strategic communications for change-makers across the nation.

The workshop focused on encompassing both storytelling theory and practical application, this hands-on workshop helped build the capacity of the participants to craft compelling stories using the frame of the Rethink Outside shared narrative developed in collaboration with Blue Sky Funders Forum members and partners. Participants built, shared and reflected on a story that communicates how their work contributes to healthy communities for all. Twenty-four participants representing 13 TRFF grantee organizations participated in this two-day workshop. Participants were also able to make connections and build their network with the group of approximately 50+ participants.



#### Grantee participants:

- Sustainability Ambassadors
- Washington Trails Association
- Friends of North Creek Forest
- Puget Soundkeeper Alliance
- Environmental Science Center
- Pacific Shellfish Institute
- Wild Society
- Great Peninsula Conservancy
- World Relief Seattle
- Deep Green Wilderness
- Pacific Marine Research
- Seattle YMCA - YESC
- Oxbow Farm & Conservation Center



# COMMUNITY IMPACT



## IMPACT INVESTING

**Investing with purpose for a more sustainable and equitable region and world.**

With the help of a \$250,000 loan guaranty from The Russell Family Foundation in 2019, Forterra and the **Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group (HCSEG)** purchased a 297-acre property at Big Beef Creek. Big Beef Creek is a special project that HCSEG has been restoring for the past 15 years given its prime position for spawning and rearing habitat for the region's salmon. Loan guarantees, like this one, are a powerful tool in philanthropy providing opportunities for organizations that may not have immediate access to capital to still secure funds to advance projects.

The Russell Family Foundation participated in a philanthropic zero-interest loan pool led by the OnePierce Community Resiliency Fund to ensure local community organizations could take advantage of Pierce County's federal COVID-19 relief funding. These bridge loans, underwritten by the Greater Tacoma Community Foundation (GTFCF), allowed eight organizations to access nearly \$1 million that otherwise would have been left on the table. Without this unique partnership between guarantors OnePierce, GTFCF and the philanthropic funders, a full underwriting process would not have been possible.

*"We are at an urgent moment for salmon, for orcas, for our communities. Sustaining the bounty of Puget Sound requires us all to stretch to make the most of natural places, like the spectacular estuary at Big Beef Creek,"*

*"We are fortunate to have farsighted donors and guarantors who enabled us to make a critical contribution to our region's resilience in a changing climate."*

**- Michelle Connor, Forterra President and CEO**

## GEORGE F. RUSSELL JR. FUND

**Tackling disparities and emphasizing community building and family-first initiatives.**

**Communities in Schools** empowers students to stay in academics and helps them achieve in life by surrounding students with a community of support. What sets them apart is the way they coordinate a comprehensive range of services to support all the needs of students - academic and non-academic - so they come to school ready to learn.

*"Thanks to the generosity of The Russell Family Foundation (TRFF) Communities In Schools of Peninsula (CISP) is able to continue working in 10 schools in the Peninsula School District by providing our students and families with basic need items such as food, hygiene products, clothing, bedding, digital navigation, emergency housing, and more. CISP staff specialize in identifying strategies to help students with academics and social emotional supports. This framework is call Multi-Tiered Student Supports (MTSS), which provides targeted interventions to struggling students. It focuses on the "whole child." MTSS supports academic growth and achievement, but it also supports many other areas such as behavior, social risk factors, mental health, attendance/absenteeism, homelessness, skill building, mitigating isolation, and more. Thanks a million TRFF!"*



**- Colleen Speer, Executive Director, Communities in Schools**

# COMMUNITY IMPACT

## JANE'S FELLOWSHIP

**Developing grassroots leaders poised to impact Pierce County communities.**

In 2021, TRFF announced its Class 9 cohort of **Jane's Fellowship Program (JFP)** who together completed a series of events in their first three months of the program from October to December 2021. JFP Class 9 is made up of a diverse mix of individuals focused on a variety of causes from helping young men leave gangs, to ensuring high school students have equity in learning, to inspiring the Latinx community to stay active, and others focused on peace, racial equity, immigration reform, criminal justice, agriculture and the arts.

*"Having first-hand experience with childhood abuse, domestic violence, addiction, mental illness, poverty, a house fire, homelessness, a 66-month prison term, etc., the Foundation is providing me with the tools to create spaces for change; change in systems, gatekeepers, and self. All my experiences are valuable to the homeless population I serve. I have embraced the principles and have applied them to my personal and professional life, and I see results. I am evolving. I am making a difference in my interactions. I discovered my purpose some time ago. The foundation is assisting me to be the best change agent I can be. I have moved from not being worthy and handcuffed to brokenness, guilt, and shame to a place of winning!"*

**- Kimberly Ellefson, JFP Class 9**



*"Jane's Fellowship Program has transformed my life and the way I view leadership and its involvement in the community. Having been selected to go through this training program with twelve total strangers that from day one have now turned into brothers and sisters is a perfect example of how disconnected we are as a community. I feel like the JFP has given me a family away from my home of origin and an enormous amount of learning opportunity through collaboration, engagement and dialogue exchanges with guest facilitators, staff and cohorts. I have grown confidence and knowledge to approach my involvement in the community work with my authentic self and learning how to navigate the challenges intersecting our communities such as economic factors, race, public safety, poverty and so much more that require teamwork and collaboration."*

**- Theirry Ruboneka, JFP Class 9**



# THANK YOU

to our board, staff and community partners for a rewarding year



THE RUSSELL FAMILY FOUNDATION

Photos Courtesy of: American Rivers, Communities In Schools of Peninsula, Community Boat Project, Forterra, Hood Canal Salmon Enhancement Group, Palmer Scholars, Salish Sea Collective, Wild Society, Comprehensive Life Resources