



Contributed photo.

Funhouse staff strengthening programs and empowering youth

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Submitted by the Funhouse Commons.

Thanks to the generosity of our community through Orcas Island Community Foundation's GiveOrcas Annual Grant Program, six Funhouse staff members were able to attend the School's Out Washington's Bridge Conference this October to

hone their craft and improve the quality of their work for children and families living on Orcas.

Staff learned from presenters about cutting-edge research, resources, and strategies for building critical skills and strengthening systems to ensure youth have greater opportunities to reach their full potential both in and out of school.

Now in its 17th year, the conference brings together nationally renowned speakers; expanded learning professionals; school leaders; researchers; and policymakers to focus on engaging and interactive program practices and educational equity.

“Each keynote speaker shared their words of empowerment, all striving to make places for children safe, nurturing, and inclusive,” said Liz Doane, Funhouse program director. “There were so many high-quality workshops. I truly feel the conference helped build confidence in our staff’s social-emotional support of our Funhouse kids.”

“This conference helped me understand what equity is,” added Sarah McKay, lead Funhouse afterschool staff. “It’s not just about giving all children the same thing. It’s about truly seeing a child, and taking into account the experiences they’ve had, and how those experiences have shaped them, their behavior, and their needs. I’ve come away with a better awareness of myself and how my own story informs the way I interact with children and with the world. I am better at listening and honoring other people’s stories. I am more empathetic and introspective. Seeing things through this lens will undoubtedly help me encourage children to feel empowered, important and confident.”

National research confirms high-quality afterschool programs strongly support youth in developing pro-social behavior with peers/adults; gains in self-efficacy and academic achievement; and reducing risky behavior. Research also shows the

more training afterschool program staff undertake, the more engaged and sensitive they are with the youth in their care, resulting in a more positive experience for the child participant.

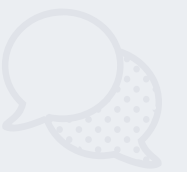
“To best provide impactful, quality care to our island’s children, we need continuing education to stay current with best practices and to re-energize and inspire our staff,” says Emilie Gincig, Funhouse executive director. “We are so grateful for the support that made it possible for us to learn and grow together at the Bridge conference.”

Please support the Funhouse staff, our programming and the youth we serve, by visiting www.funhousecommons.org (<http://www.funhousecommons.org>) and donate today or reach out to nicole@thefunhouse.org (<mailto:nicole@thefunhouse.org>).

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