



July/August 2019

## MAKING AN IMPACT... Student success starts with stability at home



The Foundation for VPS' Housing Stability Fund provided almost \$40,000 in funds to assist 317 children from 150 VPS families during the 2018-19 school year.

Visit our website for a link of the video interview:  
[foundationforvps.org/news/](http://foundationforvps.org/news/)

Stable housing has a profound impact on a child's life. Without it, children are exposed to conditions that threaten their physical, emotional, and cognitive development. With hundreds of Vancouver families struggling to find and keep stable housing due to job loss, illness, or family crisis, the Foundation for VPS created the Housing Stability Fund, which provides families with one-time rental assistance.

"I first heard about the Housing Stability Fund through the Family-Community Resource Center at my daughter's school," said Leigh, a parent of a VPS elementary student. "Without the assistance, I would have been homeless and my daughter would have been placed in foster care."

Just one of the hundreds of families who have been helped through the Foundation for VPS fund, Leigh found herself in need of housing for herself and her young daughter after escaping an abusive relationship.

"My life has gotten so much better since I got this apartment. I can actually sleep at night now," she said. "I was in that relationship for nearly 10 years and for 7 of that, I wasn't able to sleep."

Leigh shares the impact stable housing has had for her daughter. "My daughter isn't afraid anymore. She can focus on her school. She's not crying all the time because she has a place she can feel safe; a place she can call home."

Last year, the Foundation for VPS' Housing Stability Fund provided almost \$40,000 in funds to assist 317 children from 150 VPS families. Out of the District's 37 schools, 30 schools had students assisted through the fund. Council for the Homeless (CFTH) administers the Housing Stability Fund on behalf of the Foundation for VPS. VPS Family-Community Resource Coordinators refer eligible VPS students and families to CFTH to access this one-time, emergency housing financial bridge. This timely and targeted assistance from the Foundation helps keep students and families from being evicted and potentially experiencing homelessness. On average, the cost to help stabilize a VPS family is less than \$300.

Community partners including Vancouver Rotary Foundation, Community

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## INSPIRING STUDENTS... School-wide reading project builds unity at Minnehaha Elementary

Creating a greater sense of unity is often difficult to achieve in a larger school, but that was the mission of Minnehaha Elementary's school-wide reading project: One School, One Book. Organized by Teacher Librarians, Amanda Clow and Kelsey Andrewjeski, the entire school participated in reading the same book, *Wishtree*, by Katherine Applegate. Through a Foundation for Vancouver Public Schools (VPS) Engagement Grant, 560 students along with all staff members received a copy of the book. Students also participated in assemblies and cross-grade level activities relating to the story and themes in the book.

The excitement on the students' faces was apparent when they found out

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## Write from the Start School Supply Drive

*Monetary donations matched by Dick Hannah Dealerships!*

The Write from the Start School Supply Drive provides school supplies and basic needs items so students can begin the school year ready to learn. In its fifth year, Write from the Start is an initiative of Vancouver Public Schools (VPS), supported by the Foundation for VPS and corporate partners. Dozens of locations will collect supplies through internal collection drives during the three week collection period, August 1-22, 2019.

Each year, families spend on average \$100 per student to purchase school supplies. With nearly 12,000 VPS students living in poverty, back to school expenses create additional financial pressure for many families.

The Foundation for VPS is accepting online donations to help purchase new school supplies and basic needs items. All donations (up to \$10,000 total), will be matched by Dick Hannah Dealerships!

Donate or learn more at: [foundationforvps.org/school-supply-drive](http://foundationforvps.org/school-supply-drive).

## Donors Making a Difference: Dick Hannah Dealerships

For the third year, Foundation for VPS Community Champion Dick Hannah Dealerships is the lead sponsor of the Write from the Start School Supply Drive, offering \$10,000 in matching funds for the purchase of new school supplies and basic needs items to directly support VPS students this fall. In the last two years, Dick Hannah Dealerships' sponsorship helped rally the community to provide over 10 tons of school supplies to distribute to students at all grade levels.

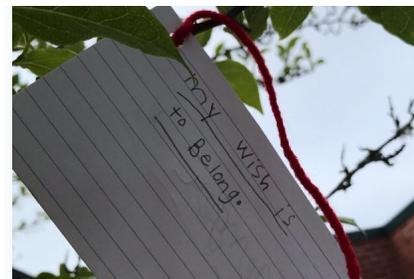
Dick Hannah Dealerships has also invested in the Community Schools Initiative, an initiative of VPS and the Foundation for VPS. Partners like Dick Hannah Dealerships allow us to help transform even more students' lives by addressing barriers to learning associated with poverty. Monetary and in-kind donations provide students with food, medical care, transportation, clothing, schools supplies, personal hygiene items, and more.

## Housing Stability Fund cont...

Foundation for Southwest Washington, and Cascades Presbyterian Church helped support the fund through donations and grants. "It's because of funding from the Foundation for VPS and their donors that the help is there for people like me," says Leigh. "It's important to support this program because it gets families off the streets and into safe environments."

Thanks to the Housing Stability Fund offered by the Foundation for VPS, safe and consistent housing is within reach for those in need. "You have no idea how appreciative I am," said Leigh. "It really does change lives."

## Minnehaha: One School, One Book cont...



they were each receiving a copy of the book.

*Wishtree* was selected for its themes of compassion, inclusion, and empathy - messages that all students in Kindergarten through 5th grade can relate to. Building on the story of friendship and acceptance of all people, lessons about honoring and respecting differences happened throughout all the classrooms. Teachers also brought different grade levels together to complete projects, creating a greater sense of unity within the school. School specialists got involved as well, assisting English Language Learners and students in the Learning Assistance Program connect vocabulary to the book. The school's dance teacher even helped students create collaborative dances.

After reading the book, students shared their own messages of inclusiveness and acceptance in our community and made a wish. While some students' wishes were fanciful, one boy wishing for "one trillion puppies," many had positive wishes of happiness and well-being for themselves, their friends, and families. One third-grader stated, "My wish is to have wisdom, because some people make wrong mistakes, and I want to make sure I do right mistakes."

Andrewjeski reflects on the book's theme of hope, saying, "Hope is important to have, because what would our world be like without hope for things to get better, hope for people to be better, and hope for wishes to come true?" As a culminating event, the school held a "Wish Day" celebration, which was incorporated into their annual family literacy night. Over 300 people attended the event - far surpassing previous years.

Beyond the reading skills that were developed, the act of the whole community reading the same book made for a powerful and engaging experience that helped to create a renewed sense of community. Throughout the school, students had opportunities to collaborate and create with one another; making connections to literature, and to each other.

**Save the date:** Give More 24! is September 19th. Your donations to the Foundation for VPS go further during this community on-line giving day.

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