



United Way of Pierce County

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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United Way of Pierce County Announces New Center for Strong Families: *Sumner-Bonney Lake School District's Family Center Selected*

March 28, 2022 – Pierce County, Wash. – United Way of Pierce County (UWPC) is pleased to announce that Sumner-Bonney Lake School District's Family Center has been selected as the eighth partner to help low-income families improve their financial well-being through United Way's Center for Strong Families. The Center for Strong Families (CSF) is a framework for neighborhood service delivery designed to help low-income individuals increase income, reduce debt and generate new wealth for themselves and their community.

The expanded services at the Sumner-Bonney Lake Family Center will serve families of students in the Sumner-Bonney Lake communities, many of whom are ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed) families or living just above the poverty line. "The Sumner-Bonney Lake School District is excited to enter into this valuable partnership, following a proven model that successfully helps families achieve financial stability using free coaching services focused on financial, employment and income support," said Superintendent Dr. Laurie Dent. "As our school district sees a sobering correlation between socioeconomic status and academic achievement, we believe that this local family resource will help close the gap in student success."

"Our research has revealed that in addition to the 8 percent of families living in poverty, there is another 23 percent who live above the federal poverty level and are employed

but struggle to provide their families with basic needs such as food and shelter. With a focus on employment and financial coaching and access to income supports, the Sumner site joins a strong network of organizations working together to implement proven strategies that respond to the problem of persistent poverty, financial instability and low-wage stagnation among families," said Dona Ponepinto, UWPC President and CEO.

CSF's innovative and integrated model educates the family on their financial behavior and encourages them to make a long-term commitment to increasing monthly net income, building credit, and acquiring assets or "Earn It, Keep It, and Grow It."

The Sumner Bonney Lake School District is partnering with Sound Outreach, who hired an Employment and Financial coach to round out the income support services the Sumner- Bonney Lake Family Center offers. "Working together, we will bundle services to provide a multi-faceted approach to income and wealth building," said Bryan Flint, executive director of Sound Outreach. "Each participating family can access these services over an extended period, potentially two to three years."

Funding for this work has been provided in part by a grant from Kaiser Permanente of Washington to expand the Centers' wealth and asset-building efforts in two new locations within Pierce County. Pierce County, Bamford Foundation, CHI Franciscan Health, MultiCare Health System, United Way of Pierce County, Washington State Employees Credit Union, and Commencement Bank have also provided additional funding. United Way of Pierce County also provides training, technical assistance and other support to the network of eight partners.

United Way of Pierce County's Center for Strong Families is based on the Center for Working Families model developed by The Annie E. Casey Foundation and adapted by LISC. The Centers for Strong Families is part of a growing national network that includes nearly 120 Financial Opportunity Centers. This evidence-based model proved that bundling employment, financial, and income support services increased the chance for an individual to become financially stable. On average, Pierce County clients who receive all three services increased their monthly net income by \$1,296, credit scores by 49 points, and decreased non-asset related debt of their net worth by \$20,617. In addition, the Center for Strong Families Network has affected local economies by empowering families to forge their paths toward financial well-being and upwards economic mobility.

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United Way of Pierce County collaborates to break the cycle of poverty by removing barriers and focusing on long-term solutions. By helping build strong families and successful kids, we create a community that will thrive.

Sound Outreach's mission is to compassionately guide people through the complex array of resources needed to achieve sustainable, independent lives. The agency is committed to fighting institutional oppression and building household economic strength in our community, connecting low-wealth individuals to financial products, counseling, income support, and benefits.

Bryan Flint
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LISC equips disinvested communities with the capital, program strategy, and know-how to become places where people can thrive. It combines corporate, government, and philanthropic resources. Since 1980, LISC has invested \$16 billion to build or rehab 350,000 affordable homes and apartments and develop 55 million square feet of retail, community, and educational space. For more, visit www.lisc.org.

The Center for Strong Families expansion at the Sumner-Bonney Lake Family Center is open by appointment.

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To learn more about United Way of Pierce County, visit www.uwpc.org or call (253) 272-4263.