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# Vashon Schools Foundation Raises $444,000 at Second Annual Gala, Surpassing Fundraising Goals

Community generosity will help expand educational opportunities and sustain essential staff and enrichment programs in Vashon public schools.

VASHON ISLAND, WA - November 15, 2026 - The Vashon Schools Foundation (VSF) raised $444,000 at its second annual fundraising gala on Saturday, November 14, exceeding both last year's $330,000 total and its $361,000 goal for this year. The result marks an increase of approximately 35% over last year and demonstrates the community's remarkable commitment to excellent, equitable public education.

Held at O Space, the Foundation's annual adult prom brought together Vashon families, local businesses, and supporters for Enchanted Evening, featuring dinner, dancing, auctions, and a raise-the-paddle appeal. Guests also heard Vashon High School senior Raf Escovedo reflect on how his island schooling shaped his life and outlook, and enjoyed a performance by the Vashon High School Pep Band.

## Supporting the People and Programs Behind Student Success

Since its founding in 2010, VSF has raised more than $4 million for Vashon public schools. For the 2026-27 school year, the Foundation committed $380,750 across the district - more than twice its 2023-24 commitment of $152,000. Nearly 79% of the current commitment supports essential staff and services: academic intervention and curriculum coaching (49.9%), family engagement (21%), and counseling (7.9%).

The remaining 21.2% supports enrichment and student programs, including Scientists in Schools, Artists in Schools, StudentLink, and One Village Youth Leadership. In 2025-26, the Vashon Nature Center's Scientists in Schools program reached 608 students across nine grade levels; Artists in Schools, offered with Vashon Center for the Arts, reached more than 1,000 students through classroom residencies and assemblies.

At the gala, McMurray Middle School teacher and emcee Larry Dubois shared the story of a student whose engagement and attendance improved after a Foundation-funded family engagement coordinator connected with the family and arranged academic support. It illustrated how these investments can change an individual student's experience at school.

## A Remarkable Evening of Giving

Fundraising began before the gala with an online auction open to supporters beyond the event itself. Guests then participated in an on-site silent auction, live auction, and paddle raise, with additional festivities including a Dessert Dash and the Deck of Dreams raffle.

Auction offerings ranged from trips to Mexico and Washington wine country to exceptional chef experiences and home improvement packages. Highlights included a private dinner with chef Matt Dillon at The Temple on Vashon, a VIP Seahawks game-day experience, and a professional painting package

donated by Sergio Perez that sold for $18,000 - the night's highest-selling auction item. These distinctive offerings helped make the event an experience supporters can look forward to each year.

VSF entered the evening with more than $197,000 raised through sponsorships, advance paddle-raise commitments, ticket sales, online auction participation, and donations. The final total of $444,000 surpassed the fundraising goal by approximately 23%.

"To see our community come together with this level of enthusiasm and generosity was extraordinary," said Nicole Donnelly Martin, gala chair and VSF board member. "This event is about far more than one wonderful evening. It is about neighbors, families, and local businesses investing in our children and the people and programs that help them thrive. We hope it remains an event Vashon looks forward to year after year."

## Community Partners Make It Possible

Vashon Thriftway was the presenting sponsor. Premier sponsors included Vashon Island Sotheby's International Realty, Georgetown Brewing and Timber Ginger, Vashon Construction, OUR CU, Ordonez Construction, Sawbones, and Heidi Grimsley. Event hospitality was made possible in part by Georgetown Brewing Company, which provided craft beer, and Solea Import Wines, which provided wine, alongside Nola's Catering, Timber Ginger Beer, and The Ruby Brink. Numerous additional sponsors, auction donors, and in-kind partners contributed to the evening's success.

## Planning More Robust Support for the Future

State funding does not fully meet the cost of the staff, specialized services, and enrichment that Vashon students need. This significant step change in fundraising allows the Foundation to explore additional programming during the current school year while planning more robust support for essential staff, academic services, and enrichment opportunities in 2027-28. It also gives VSF a stronger basis for working proactively with the school district and community partners rather than responding only to immediate funding gaps.

"This level of support gives us the opportunity to do more for students now and to plan for next school year with greater confidence," said Donnelly Martin. "That ability to build sustained support for teachers, counselors, and enrichment programs is one of the most exciting outcomes of the evening."

## Recognizing the People Behind the Work

VSF is led by co-presidents India Alarcon and Betsey Gleb, secretary Morgan Donnelly, treasurer Jennie Mattingly, and board members Melissa Beal, Nicole Donnelly Martin, Jordan Karr, Ellen Kim, Tera Langland, Kennedy Leavens, Libby McCullagh, Claire Newman, Brick Spangler, Allison Tourville, Kara Weber, and Chian Wu. The board is supported by administrative coordinator Kelly Keenan and accountant Glynis Delargy. More than 40 volunteers helped bring the gala to life.

"What matters most is what this generosity makes possible for students," said co-presidents Alarcon and Gleb. "Vashon has shown once again what a community can accomplish when it comes together for its public schools."

The Foundation thanks every donor, sponsor, auction contributor, guest, and volunteer for helping keep Vashon's schools strong and giving every child the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.

## About the Vashon Schools Foundation

Founded in 2010, the Vashon Schools Foundation is a community-supported nonprofit committed to excellence and equity in Vashon public education. Through fundraising and partnerships, VSF supports essential staff, academic services, and enriching educational opportunities throughout the Vashon Island School District.