

2023-2024 IMPACT REPORT

INSPIRING KIDS TO DREAM BIG





A free referral-based after-school program for under-resourced children

About Children of the Valley

Founded in 2006, Children of the Valley works in partnership with the Mount Vernon, Sedro-Woolley, and Burlington-Edison school districts to serve students K-5/6* referred by a school teacher, counselor, or administrator for exhibiting substantial personal or academic need. We currently operate four sites with a total of 11 classrooms.

Free to the families and students we serve, our program provides daily instructor-led academic assistance, enrichment activities, and social-emotional learning opportunities, in addition to assisting families with meeting basic needs.

*6th grade is available depending on the district

Our Mission

Children of the Valley serves under-resourced children and their families by valuing their cultural identity and empowering them through education, personal growth, and mentorship.

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View this Impact Report online at covmv.org/impact-report

17 Years of Inspiring Kids to Dream Big

Dear COV Partners,

When I reflect on this past year, I am filled with pride and gratitude for the amazing ways we're impacting children and their families in our community. Our success is made possible through strong community relationships.

We successfully completed our 17th school year serving students in our community and our third year in our newest sites in Burlington, Sedro-Woolley, and Washington Elementary in Mount Vernon. It's beginning to feel like we are truly connected to these communities and have established a strong operational foundation.

Below are some highlights of our accomplishments this past year!



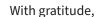
We awarded a total of \$9,500 to our first COV Dream Big Scholarship recipients, realizing a vision we have had since the inception of COV in 2006! It's truly an honor to support young scholars on their journeys into higher education.

Cascade Bicycle Club Grant

We received a grant from the Cascade Bicycle Club to support middle school students, ensuring continuity of care as they transition to middle school. We are thrilled to announce this program will kick off this fall.

As we celebrate these achievements, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to our generous donors, the local community, and our partner organizations. Your unwavering support and dedication make all of this possible. Together, we are making a lasting impact on the lives of children and their families, fostering their growth, and building a stronger, more connected community.

Thank you for believing in our mission and for your continued commitment to the success of COV and the children we serve.



J Flor Lucatero

Flora Lucatero | **Executive Director** flora@covmv.org (360) 982-2399











A Community Rising for the Kids

Dear COV Partners,

During my time as principal at Mount Baker Middle School, I was often frustrated about the need for students to have academic support and guidance between the school day and the time their parents came home from work. Many students were struggling academically, getting into trouble, and their behaviors spilled into the school day. I wished that somehow there could be a neighborhood safety net to gather them up and give them the help they needed.

Little did I know that at Centennial Elementary School a 3rd grade teacher, Mary Nolte, had that same vision. She shared the vision with a group of community leaders, and Children of the Valley was founded. Over the past 18 years, the number of children served and the investment from our community have grown tremendously.

This year, as I fulfilled my second and final term as COV Board Chair, I am in awe of the community support for COV. The large attendance and generous financial contributions raised at the auction were evidence of our Skagit community investing in lives of the children, families, and our future. The room hummed with excitement from the audience of ethnically diverse participants: civic leaders, bus drivers, teachers, parents, and professionals from all aspects of our greater Skagit County.

Another recognition of the profound influence of COV in our community was the **Community Impact Award** presented to COV by Dr. Ismael Vivanco at the regional Superintendents' Award Ceremony. This distinction is evidence of the impact COV's five Cornerstones of Care are having on the success of the children and families we serve, as well as the academic and cultural fabric of Skagit County.

2024-2025 Board of Directors

Dylan Sicklesteel **Board Chair**

Dwight Nelson **Secretary**

Carlos Flores
Treasurer

Erica Gaona

Parent Liaison

Board Members

Brad Bergfalk

Steven Mowat

David Rodriguez

Aaron Starkovich

Monica Vivanco

Ken Wagner

At the conclusion of my tenure on the Board, I am excited to announce that Dylan Sicklesteel will be the new COV Board Chair. I will continue my involvement as a volunteer, supporting COV and our community in whatever capacity is needed. Together We Rise!

Ch K. Cakley



Sincerely,

Beth Ashley
2018-2024 Board Chair



2023-2028 Strategic Plan

Roadmap for a Bright Future

With Children of the Valley sites and classrooms successfully underway in Mount Vernon, Sedro-Woolley, and Burlington, the Board of Directors established a five-year strategic plan to support and expand program operations. It is clear from waiting lists and community input that the need for COV is high and growing among all grades. With this need in mind, the Board of Directors identified three priorities to serve COV's strategic plan.



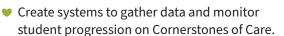
Priority One • Fiscal Sustainability

Diversify funding to sustain site expansion and program fidelity.

- Increase our number of monthly donors.
- Expand our Leadership Circle
- Raise awareness of program needs to attract new financial support.

Priority Three • Program Fidelity

Ensure that COV's mission and program integrity are maintained at each site and in each classroom.



Provide infrastructure support in order to maintain program quality.

Priority Two • Middle School Support

Expand vertically by developing a middle school component for student retention and academic success.

Create support services for COV students moving onto middle school. We are excited to announce that COV

is partnering with Cascade Bicycle Club to start a bike club in the fall for middle schoolers in the Mount Vernon, Burlington-Edison, and Sedro-Woolley school districts.

Engage COV graduates to continue their connection to COV by volunteering.

The number of our volunteers who are COV graduates is increasing. Additionally, we now offer monthly volunteer workshops to help prepare our youth for entering the workforce.

New Priority: COV Alumni Group Now that COV graduates in middle school have a way to keep engaged with the program, we are exploring ways to keep COV alumni of all ages connected to our program, and to each other!













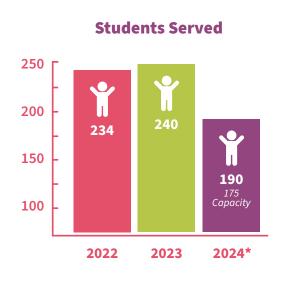






The Truth Behind the Numbers

A combination of school district budget shortfalls and the early expiration of COVID relief funds led to the closure of our Centennial Elementary site and the loss of four classrooms among our remaining sites, decreasing our program's maximum capacity to 175 children.* We are operating beyond maximum capacity, with 50 referred children on our waitlist, some of whom have been waiting for several years. Additionally, many children who would attend our program cannot do so due to a lack of safe and reliable transportation home after programming. We are working diligently to increase our transportation services to bridge this resource gap for these children.



Bethany Site

- 85 Student Capacity
- 85 Students Served
- **60** Families Served

Washington Site

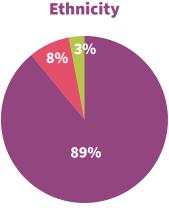
- **30** Student Capacity
- 39 Students Served
- **29** Families Served

Sedro-Woolley Site

- **30** Student Capacity
- 27 Students Served
- **17** Families Served

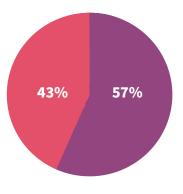
Burlington Site

- 30 Student Capacity
- 39 Students Served
- 23 Families Served



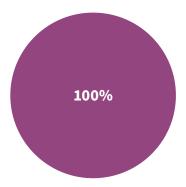
- Hispanic/LatinX
- Caucasian
- Other

Migrant Population



- Migrant
- Non-migrant

Low Income



 Children qualifying for free or reduced priced meals

Middle School Bike Club to Launch Fall 2024

We are excited to announce that COV is partnering with Cascade Bicycle Club to start a after school bike club in the fall for middle schoolers in the Mount Vernon, Burlington-Edison, and Sedro-Woolley school districts. In addition to learning how to safely and skillfully ride bikes through our communities, our middle schoolers will learn basic bike repair skills, bike laws, and the benefits of bicycling for health and transportation.

Youth who participate in these after-school bike clubs will also have the opportunity to earn a bike of their own.
Funding for this bike education programming comes from Washington state's Climate Commitment Act, which supports the new School-Based Bicycle Safety Education Program created by the state Legislature and the Washington State Department of Transportation.

Fleet Expansion for Safe Transportation

We are thrilled to expand our fleet with **two new vans**, ensuring safe and reliable transportation for field trips and rides home after programming. A heartfelt thank you to HF Sinclair, Puget Sound Energy, Peoples Bank, the Jansen Foundation, and the Boeing employee match program for their generous funding that made this possible.

Conway School District Partnership

We're excited to share that **students from Conway School District referred to our program can now join COV** at our Mount Vernon location hosted at Bethany Covenant Church.

COV Online Store

Get ready! **Our online store is launching soon**, featuring COV apparel and accessories. It's the perfect way to show your COV pride while supporting our program! Stay tuned for updates!



Academic Assistance

COV Children Receive 1 Hour of Daily Academic Support

Through regular correspondence with teachers, we tailor efforts specific to each child's academic needs, helping them develop better study skills, increase knowledge of core classroom curriculum, and boost self-confidence.

- 30 minutes of daily reading support
- Academic games and activities
- Tutoring support with homework completion
- Regular communication with school teacher

"They made 1.5 years growth in reading."

"The homework help has made them more confident in math and reading."

"They are making great connections to prior learning."

"Students are

"Their writing has significantly improved."

Attendance Improves with COV Participation

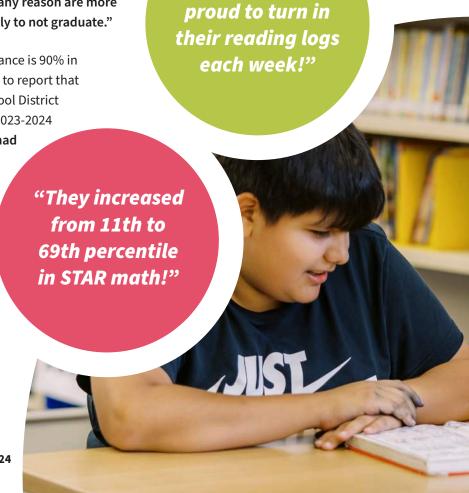
According to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), "Attendance is a powerful signal and leading indicator of equity." Students that miss just two days a month for any reason are more likely to not read at grade level, and more likely to not graduate."

While the benchmark for regular school attendance is 90% in Washington State and nationwide, we're proud to report that 100% of COV children in the Mount Vernon School District had an average attendance of 92% during the 2023-2024 school year. And, one-third of those students had an attendance rate of 98%!"

*Based on data provided by the Mount Vernon School District

"When kids feel safe, loved, and cared for, they want to be around. Our staff and volunteers create an environment for our kids to show up be their true and best self. When they feel like they matter, they can learn—and this is how we're able to best support our schools."

- Flora Lucatero, Executive Director



Social Emotional Learning

Supporting Children's Social-Emotional Well-Being for Enhanced Learning

A child's social-emotional well-being is one of the largest factors in their ability to learn. Our goal is to provide COV children with the necessary tools to understand and manage their unique, and often confusing, emotions.

Thanks to our partnerships with Skagit Valley Family YMCA's MV Hope Coalition and Sedro-Woolley Rise, **COV uses Positive Action, a highly-studied and proven curriculum** that teaches children how to control their emotions, put themselves in others' shoes, and practice self-care.

- COV staff attend annual Positive Action trainings
- COV children receive 15-30 minutes of daily S-EL
- COV staff taught a combined 389 hrs of S-EL during '23-'24 school year





"They began using their words to solve problems with peers!"





Enrichment Activities

Exposure to Real-World Experiences & Knowledge

COV strives to provide its children with a holistic, whole-circle approach to education which means opening the door to enrichment opportunities that may not be offered to them otherwise. This exposure enhances each child's appreciation for diversity and expression, while also improving fine motor skills and confidence in their decision-making abilities.



Exploring the Great Outdoors

- Pumpkin patch at Schuh Farms and B&Z Farm
- Bowman Bay at Deception Pass State Park
- ♥ Hillcrest, Kiwanis, and Edgewater parks
- Hiking & archery with the Boy Scouts at Fire Mountain
- Pat's Playground, Memorial Park Splash Pad

Dreaming Big About The Future

- Tours of Western Washington University and Skagit Valley College
- Trips to or weekly visits from Central Skagit, Mount Vernon, and Burlington Libraries
- McLean Road Fire Department
- Mount Vernon Police Department

Igniting Creativity

- Tri-Dee Arts pottery painting class
- Museum of Northwest Art (MoNA)
- Children's Museum of Skagit County

Learning New Skills

- Gardening
- Skating at Skagit Skate
- Bowling at Riverside Lanes
- Basketball Tips from the SVC Men's Basketball Game
- Hoop for the Valley Basketball Clinic with Tyler Amaya
- Tennis with Skagit Valley Tennis Association
- ♥ SNAP-Ed nutrition workshop



Want to support the enrichment of COV children?

Shop our Amazon Wish List!

Family Support

Helping Families Where They Need it Most

Our goal is to build meaningful relationships with COV families to understand how we can best assist them. We offer direct support with things like housing, utilities, and school supplies, and connect families to community resources, helping them navigate any challenges that arise.

Here are just a few of the events we organized with community partners to support COV families this year.

- Utilities assistance with Puget Sound Energy
- Financial literacy workshop with SaviBank
- College savings workshop with Skagit Foundation for Academic Endeavors
- Annual Dream Big Skagit Valley College field trip and resource fair



Family Spotlight

The Ocampo family has been part of COV's Sedro-Woolley site for two years. We recently asked them about their experience with COV.

How has COV helped you and your family?

COV has supported our family by helping with academics. It's a big help especially with a language barrier of only speaking Spanish. This program allows me to help my kids.

What positive impact have you seen in your children since attending COV? In a lot of different ways, it's helped my son, Niko, academically improve a lot in reading, writing and speaking skills. And with my other son, Noah, COV has helped with social-emotional skills like learning how to engage with others.

What is the biggest impact COV has had on your family?

Above all, they are a great help for parents, like in my case, who don't know English. They help us with the children's homework, and to socialize more with other Latino children like them.



Mentorship

COV's Impact Reaches Far & Wide

To create positive and lasting change, we provide ways for COV children to stay engaged with the program through volunteering and employment opportunities. Additionally, our partnerships in higher education allow COV to be a site for work-based learning, providing invaluable experience to our next generation of educators and immeasurable inspiration to COV children.

Here are just a few ways we're providing guidance to COV children, staff, and volunteers.

- Volunteers get comprehensive training and can attend monthly job search workshops.
- The COV Dream Big Scholarship supports program graduates, staff, and volunteers in pursuing higher education.
- Our jobs and internships provide career pathways for the next generation of educators.



COV proudly partners with Skagit Valley College (SVC) and Western Washington University (WWU) to shape the future of education.

We collaborate with SVC's Maestros Para el Pueblo for work-based learning and employment, and this fall, SVC launched its Nurturing Relationships early childhood education course at COV, equipping future educators with essential skills like child safety, development, and culturally responsive teaching.

Through WWU's Compass 2 Campus program, aspiring educators volunteer at COV for handson classroom experience. Since 2021, we've also hosted WWU Human Services interns, some of whom have joined our team!

Together, we create a space where COV children dream big about their own college futures.







Together We Rise

Many of our volunteers are former COV students who want to continue to inspire kids to dream big just as volunteers did for them while they were in the program. We love seeing faces of all ages and backgrounds in our volunteers!

Volunteer Spotlight

Rob Zwick is a retired physician from Skagit Valley Medical Center and has been volunteering with us multiple days a week since 2021. He has volunteered a total of 138 hours at our Bethany Site.

What do you love most about volunteering?

I love spending time with the students and associating with the staff. The staff are always so patient and it is a good environment.

Why did you choose to volunteer at COV?

I have attended the Art Auction for several years, and after a while, I saw how the student alumni appreciated COV—how they would build friendships, and how impactful the tutoring/mentorship was.

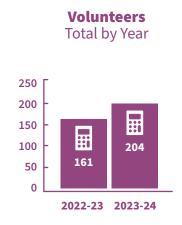
What's your most memorable COV moment?

I love seeing the friendships that each student builds with one another and how they look out for each other.



Volunteer Report







If They Can Dream It, They Can Achieve It!

When children "graduate" COV after 5th and 6th grade, we take photos of them in cap and gown to help them DREAM BIG about their next graduation!

Congrats to the future classes of 2030 & 2031!









Every year, we celebrate high school and college graduations of COV alumni, staff, and volunteers.







COV Alumni Spotlight

Diana Carrillo-Betancourt attended COV from 1st through 6th grade.

What was your life like when you joined COV?

My parents immigrated in 1989 to the Skagit Valley. I didn't have the resources at home to be able to get school work done, coming from parents that worked long hours and English wasn't their first language. Getting referred to COV by my school was one of the best things that could have happened to me.

What were the immediate impacts of COV on your life?

The immediate impact COV had was structure. Growing up I struggled with dyslexia, reading was a big struggle and they knew that and took that extra time to help me. COV gave me that safe place, making me feel like I did have a chance in this society from the start.

What were the lasting impacts of COV on your life?

I could never wrap my head around the fact that people I have never met would help me without even knowing me. They did it with the care from their heart. That will always stay with me and I will always be grateful.



Get Involved

How Will You Make an Impact?

Children of the Valley was started by our community for our community. So, it should come as no surprise that we are powered by our community! Whether it's making a financial gift or donating your time, there are a multitude of ways to get involved and make a difference!



Opportunities to Support COV



Planned Gift

Guarantee future generations of children equitable access to education by including COV in your estate planning. Ready to get started? (360) 982-2399.



Leadership Circle

Our Leadership Circle includes businesses and organizations that make a three-year financial commitment to our program.

Interested in joining? Email Executive Director, Flora Lucatero, at flora@covmv.org.



Volunteer

Whether you enjoy preparing daily snacks or prefer hands-on reading with the children, there is a job for everyone regardless of availability and ability. Apply online at covmv.org/volunteer



Donate

Children of the Valley is a federally-recognized 501C3 and all donations are tax-deductible. Tax ID: 26-2867395 Donate online at covmv.org/donate



Tell a Friend

Sharing with others about our program and the impact we are committed to making helps build community awareness while providing an opportunity to join us in making this difference.

Follow us! @ @ @covskagit



Fundraisers

Participate in one of our annual fundraisers!

- Giving Tree (November 11, 2024)
- Giving Tuesday (December 3, 2024)
- Art Auction & Dinner (April 25, 2025)



Financial Overview

Investing in Our Community's Future

Thanks to the generous contributions of individuals, foundations, corporations, and grants, we've been able to sustain our growth and continue supporting our community's most under-resourced children at no cost to their families. Each year, it costs about \$5,000 per child to operate our program. We view these expenses not just as costs but as vital investments in the future of our community. Every dollar spent helps shape a brighter future, empowering children with the resources and support they need to thrive and succeed.



Leadership Circle

Game-changing Sustaining Partners

Our Leadership Circle includes businesses and organizations dedicated to providing education, enrichment, and social-emotional support to our communities' most under-resourced children. Those in our Leadership Circle have made a 3-year commitment to support Children of the Valley's mission. Join our Leadership Circle! To learn more, email flora@covmg.org

"Any of us can be either dream makers or dream breakers and I believe Children of the Valley is just one key component that really makes dreams come true for our kids by giving them that belief, structure, and support that they need to be able to dream big."

Dr. Ismael Vivanco Former Superintendent, Mount Vernon School District







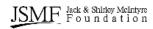




Join Our

Leadership

Circle







Children of the Valley is sustained through the generous donations received from individual community members, churches, businesses, grants, and foundations. Your contribution allows us to continue providing vital services and support to the children most in need from our community at no cost to their families. We do receive monthly donations from many of our COV families who are able to give what they can.

Partnerships We'd like to thank our community partners for their invaluable support. Each of our partners has given us their space, supplies, or expertise just when we needed it most!

Baylii Branding **Bayside Specilities Bethany** Covenant Church Birdsign Consulting Burlington Chamber of Commerce Burlington Public Library Burlington-Edison School District

Central Skagit Library

Children's Museum Skagit CTK Hope Church Compass to Campus Consejo Counseling and Réferral Service

Dimensional Communications Foundation for Academic Endeavors Helping Hands Food Bank

Hoop for the Valley Immaculate Heart of Mary Church Kelly Clare Photography Labor and Industries Lithtex Northwest Maestros Para el Pueblo Mark Peterson Mount Baker Council. Boy Scouts of America

Mount Vernon Chamber

of Commerce

Mount Vernon City Library Mount Vernon Conway Youth Baseball Mount Vernon Pitbulls Mount Vernon Police Department

Mount Vernon School District Museum of

Northwest Art MV Hope Coalition OSPI-State of Washington PNW Rain

Puget Sound Energy Sedro-Woolley Rise Sedro-Woolley School District

Skagit Community Foundation Skagit Gleaners

Skagit Law Group-Laura Minton-Breckenridge

Skagit Regional Health Skagit Transit

Skagit Valley College

Skagit Valley College Men's & Women's Basketball Team

Skagit Valley Tennis Association Skagit Valley YMCA SNAP-ED Program The Salish Sea School

WA Vocational Services

Rainmakers We are indebted to the donors who provide recurring financial support to COV. This includes monthly, bi-monthly, and quarterly donations, as well as individuals who have given consistently throughout the year.

Wilbur & Sylvia Anderson Carmen & Carl Bruner Beth & Luke Baeslack John & Carol Beima Kenny & Jenny Bergsma

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Youngquist
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Oscar Montealegre

Torey & Melissa Nelson

Jenna Moores

Abby Murdock

Jordanne Nevin

Cindy Niman

Nancy Nuno

Rene & Karla Nuñez

Sue Ney

Dreamcatchers Thank you to our Dreamcatchers who have given at least one time this past fiscal year. We are beyond grateful for your generous contributions to our program!

Lauri Harvey

Adriana Tarango & Abel Castillo Mary Adkins Rosario Aguilar Jorge & Cynthia Aguirre Betsy Aldridge Shelley Amarillas Tyler & Veronica Amaya Don & Kathy Andersen Marci Anderson Claudio & Celina Angulo Sarah L Ashbrook Israel & Yadria Avendaño Kelli Baker Maria Banuelos Adele Barborinas Gabriela Batista Jacque Beamer Richard & Sharon Benson Dan Berard Brad & Roxi Bergfalk Cathy Best Julie Blazek Bonnie Bobgan Ginny Bode Barbara Bond- Howard Patricia Born Adam Bowler Travis Boyd Rita Brautigam Chris & Amy Breuninger Sarah Brewer Allen Brown Gary & Susan Brown Peter & Laurel Browning David & Jacki Brunson Kurt & Janice Buchanan Dana Bucke

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Dan & Patti Mitzel

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