

Snohomish County Children's Commission Annual Report 2010



COMMISSIONERS:

**Pam Wessel-Estes—
Chair**

**Chanelle Carlin—
Vice Chair**

**Laura Hamilton—
Executive Committee**

**Jerry Strieck—
Executive Committee**

**Chris Hoiby —
Executive Committee**

Matt Bench

Forrest Brown

Peggy Carey

Gail Davenport

Marian Harrison

Elaine Larson

Michele Meaker Pin

Ronald Riter

Michele Sayko

Kerri Schwab



we value kids

Report from the Chair - Pam Wessel-Estes

In January of 2011, the Snohomish County Children's Commission will officially turn 25 years old! In preparing to write this 2010 annual report, I spent several hours reading over the 20th anniversary summary newsletter from 2005-06. Wow, our Children's Commission has a rich and impressive history; one that everyone who has ever touched it, past or present, can be proud of. (Please check out the SC Children's Commission website at: www.wevaluekids.org to learn more about the History and successes of the Commission.)

In the five years since we turned 20, we have seen some pretty remarkable changes. Economic woes nation-wide and locally have resulted in some severe cuts to agencies and services which support our children and their families, often the most vulnerable.

Even so, many of our contributions toward bringing positive change to Snohomish County have endured the test of time; the Children's Museum is still looking beautiful and strong, the 'We Value Kids' table still meets each and every month in downtown Everett, our county and region are held up as leaders in early learning planning and collaboration, and, Cocoon House and Dawson place are still open and serving children, youth and their families with needed services.

Over the course of 2010, the Children's Commission continued to look inward as we focused on how to accomplish our charge as laid out by county charter and by-laws; set some agreed upon boundaries on processes such as Commission endorsement (such as the 'Growing Heart Smart Kids' brochure created and published by Deaconess Children's Services); and building our capacity to sustain the Commission including a more determined focus on membership. We spent time in meetings learning from community experts about important issues such as gangs and youth prostitution prevention from the Everett Police Department, the vital work of the Snohomish County Federated Health and Safety Network, the WA State Department of Early Learning's long range planning and process, and the status of our LGBTQ youth. In August we held our annual retreat at the beautiful new Snohomish Library. One of the most important outcomes of the retreat was a decision to narrow our topical focus to one topic for the year. In the 2010-11 Commission year we will be focused on

Report from the Chair Continued

bullying: what is happening in our communities and schools, what prevention and support services are being provided, and where the gaps are. We plan to accomplish this by sponsoring community forums, asking experts in fields such as law enforcement, education and mental health to inform us, and by carefully and respectfully listening to children and youth who have experienced or witnessed some form of bullying. We will then prepare a report and present our findings to the Snohomish County Council and to our County Executive. We are looking forward to becoming better informed about this critically important issue – one that too many of our children and families are struggling with, and that can do such terrible harm to our community.

We Value Kids. It is easy to say, yet, not always easy to practice. As Children's Commissioners, my colleagues and I are on record as community advocates and champions of children in our communities, our neighborhoods and our homes. My dream is that one day, in the not too distant future - regardless of the economy, the political climate, or parental status; every adult can look in the mirror and say to themselves with confidence and determination "I value kids – every single one"; then, go out into the world and behave accordingly.

Pam Wessel-Estes currently works for the Snohomish Health District in the Community Health Division. She holds Bachelor's and Master's Degrees in psychology with an emphasis on community organization & development, and has 30 plus years of experience developing and managing non-profit organizations and social & health programs. Pam moved to Snohomish County with her husband Scott and their two wonderful children in 1991, and loves being near both the water and mountains. Her passion is in improving and supporting the health and wellness of all people, especially children. Pam represents Council District 2.



Membership Committee Report: Chanelle Carlin, Chair

The membership of the Children's Commission fluctuated somewhat over the course of 2010. While we maintained strong leadership on the Executive Committee, we lost a bit of ground in general membership. During 2009-10, there were 17 adult commissioners (in addition to the County Staff support members) and one youth commissioner.

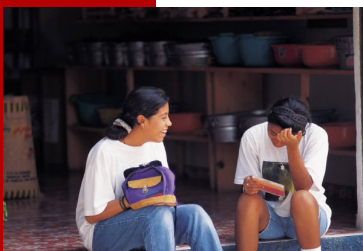
We believe that part of the challenge has been due to a lack of clarity and continuity in the pathway to membership, and how membership opportunities are communicated to potential Commissioners. In late 2009 support staff and Executive Committee leadership began a process of clarifying with Executive Reardon's staff the protocol for approval of nominees to the Commission, and timing in getting those nominees approved by the County Council. During early 2010, the membership committee has worked to formalize the agreed protocols and pathway to membership. These documents were initially presented to the full commission for review in the spring with a final vote approving them at a late summer meeting.

Chanelle Carlin has over 25 years experience working with children and families both in the United States and internationally and currently works as the Vice President of Programs at Deaconess Children's Services in her hometown of Everett. Chanelle earned her Bachelor's degree in History from Portland State University in Oregon and her Master's degree in Social Science from The Open University in Great Britain. Chanelle is also very active in our community, serving this commission, as a member of the Everett Rotary Club and Beta Sigma Phi, and is in her second year as a Camp Fire Leader. She represents Council District 2.

Community Juvenile Justice Committee: Peggy Carey, Chair

The CJJC continues its participation in the county's Gang Community Response Team (G-CRT). After a detailed gang assessment was completed by the CJJC Project Director, the G-CRT steering committee used that data to craft and finalize a local strategic plan to address gang issue in Snohomish County.

The G-CRT oversees the implementation of "Gang Outreach and Intervention Grant" youth and gang violence outreach and intervention program, which includes working in schools to standardize local district policies, and reaching out proactively to the Latino community to support their efforts in promoting healthy communities for their youth. This project is underway with staff hired, outreach and intervention services on the street, and case management for youth recruited into the program via Cocoon House's network, as well as family/community services, and training for related social service providers.



We also continue to watch for other resources to enhance our efforts. To that end, we provided extensive technical assistance to the Boys and Girls Club and other G-CRT partners in their unsuccessful grant application to target prevention efforts to youth at risk for gang involvement. This was a highly competitive national grant awarded to very few communities.

A training for reviewing information from the Relative Rate Index: Socio-Economic Geographic Distribution had to be postponed twice due to unforeseen issues with the trainer from the state Office of Juvenile Justice.

Peggy Carey currently works for Committee for Children, the non-profit leader in bullying, violence, and child abuse prevention for over 30 years. Previously, she taught at Edmonds Community College in the Family Life Education Department. Peggy has taught preschool, directed Child Care Centers, and taught Early Child Education courses at the community college and University levels. Since their daughter has left for college, Peggy and her husband have moved to their boat in the Edmonds Marina and plan to spend summers exploring the beautiful islands north of us. Peggy represents Council District 3.

**You are the
bows from
which your
children as
living arrows
are sent forth.**

Gibran, Kahlil

Early Learning Coalition: Elaine Larson, Co-Chair

The Children's Commission Early Learning Coalition (ELC) has continued their work using the Early Learning for Life Initiative plan, developed last year, as its guide. Early in 2010 the coalition was awarded a generous grant from the Boeing Company to hire a Children's Social Emotional Wellness Coordinator to support the work of the ELC and work as a community liaison. The ELC also received a grant from the Foundation for Early Learning to further continue its work in the community improving children's social emotional wellness which is a priority of their business plan which aligns with local business interests.

The ELC operates a number of sub-committees including: Professional Development, Children's Social Emotional Wellness (CSEW), School District/ Gates Foundation Grant, Early Learning Family Connections, LGBTQ, and Public Engagement. These committees work to build community involvement in Snohomish County some annual highlights include:

Early Learning Coalition Continued: Elaine Larson, Co-Chair

1) Brought nationally recognized neuroscientist, John Medina, to Everett in early 2011 to speak about the importance of early brain development in young children. He presented Brain Rules at the Civic Auditorium on January 8th.

2) A group of 7 people headed to Harvard to discuss creating sustainability and public awareness around issues related to PreK-3 alignment.

3) Through partnership with Snohomish County's Child Care Resource and Referral Program, Children's Home Society and the Americorps Vista Program, the Bright Beginnings training for play group facilitators serving FFN (Family Friends and Neighbors) caring for children occurred.

4) Trainings were held in the community on LGBTQ and bullying issues. Support and leadership was provided to community organizations to create and operate 'Family, Friend and Neighbor Play and Learn' groups.

5) Connections between school districts and local early learning providers continue to strengthen in several school districts including Edmonds, Everett and Lake Stevens.

Even within a difficult economic environment, the ELC continues to utilize strong collaborations and passion to support the children in Snohomish County.

Elaine Larson currently works for the Department of Early Learning as a child care center licensor. She also serves as co-chair of the Snohomish County Early Learning Coalition and sits on United Way's Kids Matter Vision Council. She has been in the early learning and child care field for over 30 years and is passionate about helping children grow up healthy and prepared for life. She represents Council District 4.

Healthy Communities: Chris Hoiby, Chair

The Healthy Communities project, a program of the Snohomish Health District, was started in 2004 in response to rising rates of obesity and related chronic disease in Snohomish County, and across the United States. Three cities in Snohomish County - Marysville, Lynnwood, and Everett, have established action plans which identify policies and projects that will create and sustain healthier and safer places to live. A few project highlights from 2009-10 included:

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| Marysville: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * A very successful Healthy Communities Challenge Day was held in June * New sidewalks and bike lanes have been laid * 110 community garden plots were developed and successfully planted for improved fitness programs in Marysville schools |
| Lynnwood: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * A Safe Routes to School project began at a local elementary school * Identifying start up funding and finalizing plans for a Farmers Market * A collaborative proposal with Snohomish Health District was identified and drafted for submittal to Swedish/Edmonds Hospital District in order to sustain Healthy Communities work |
| Everett: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Master bicycle plan for the city was finalized * Safe Routes to Schools grants were submitted for two elementary schools * New zoning changes were made to support transit use |

Chris Hoiby is a retired teacher, coach, and principal from Mukilteo School District and has lived in Everett his entire life. He currently works part time for the Everett YMCA as the community coordinator for kids and families who live in shelters in the Everett Area. He believes that it truly does take a village to raise a child - especially in today's world, and that as adults we need to support kids by volunteering in schools and community programs. Chris represents Council District 2.

Legislative Committee: Marian Harrison, Co-Chair

The committee in 2010 worked from the 2009 Legislative Agenda. Main areas of focus were revenue to support schools, early learning programs, childcare centers and family preservation services. Committee Co-Chairs Harrison and Meaker Pin attended the Revenue Rally in Olympia in the fall along with approximately 5000 others. Despite community activism, many cuts were made with significant impact on programs supporting families and their children across Washington State.

Looking toward the 2011 Legislative Agenda, our goal is to try to preserve vital programming in Snohomish County by working closely with advocates to promote the Children's Alliance agenda of Early Learning Now, Cover All Kids (Health Care), End Child Hunger (Promoting President Obama's plan), and Fostering Fairness for Kids (Following the President's Anti-Bullying guidelines). We will also again promote and support the annual lobby day in Olympia 'Have a Heart for Kids Day' on February 22 at 8:30 am.

Marian Harrison is a life-long resident of Snohomish County and retired from the Arlington School District after 22 years. She is the mother of seven children, and has eleven grandchildren and one great grandson! In addition to her dedicated membership to the Children's Commission, she currently serves on the Board of Evergreen Manor, the Council of the Federated Health and Safety Network, as a Unit Leader of the League of Women Voters, and is an active member of Immaculate Conception Parish in Arlington. Marian has served our community as an outstanding advocate for children and families for 55 years. She represents Council District 1.

WWW.WEVALUEKIDS.ORG

Public Relations Committee: Ron Riter, Chair

The committee is formalizing procedures for approving information that is to be released to the public. The first goal is to inform the public about each of the areas where the Commission is active: Early Learning, Juvenile Justice, Legislative Advocacy and Membership, by using our WeValueKids website, social media and print and broadcast media. The second goal is to publicize information about our special issue for this year: Bullying. The third goal is to provide resource information to parents, children and all others who care about the welfare of children of Snohomish County. This includes the importance of early childhood development, youth violence prevention, intervention and suppression, adverse childhood experience study, the causes, identification, and prevention of bullying and support for homeless youth.

Ron Riter is a retired engineer who participated in the development, testing and safety analysis of software that is used to control airplanes. He has been involved in juvenile diversion and foster care citizen review for over 20 years and continues to be committed to improving the opportunities of children. He enjoys spending time with his three children's families that includes four grandchildren. He spends time in the mountains with the Everett Mountaineers and with Club Alpino Italiano - Pacific Northwest a sub-section of Pisa. Ron, Bev and two children moved to Snohomish County in 1993. Ron represents Council District 2.

*If our American
way of life fails
the child, it fails
us all.*

Pearl S. Buck

Purpose and Mission

The Snohomish County Children's Commission recognizes that children are our most precious resource, and the most important investment relative to the future of our society. We recognize that it is up to us, the adult members of our society, to invest wisely in our children, to protect and nurture them, and to adequately prepare them to assume stewardship of the future.

The Commission is a group of twenty-five members, including two youth, appointed by Snohomish County Council to serve as advisors on issues of health, safety, and the welfare of the children of Snohomish County. Research and development work are conducted through forums, public hearings, and a strong committee/project structure. Advocacy work is accomplished through publications, legislative efforts, active involvement in resolving local issues, and monthly meetings held in public session. Members serve a four-year term and represent: health and human services, law and justice, education, business and labor, children and youth, parents, minorities and concerned citizens.



Commissioners envision a society in which:

- All children have access to adequate health care, and opportunities to reach their optimal health
- All children have opportunities to contribute meaningfully to their community
- All children receive a quality education, tailored to their individual needs and learning styles
- All children live in a permanent home, where they experience safety and stability, and where they are loved unconditionally
- All children are safe from abuse, bullying, and the harmful effects of alcohol and other drugs
- All children have access to adequate nutrition and exercise for a healthy mind and body
- All children experience positive bonding with a parental figure, and have exposure to appropriate adult role models
- Decision makers routinely make abundant resources available for the needs of children and families, and consider the best interests of children and families in all decisions