



Washington County Kids (WCK)

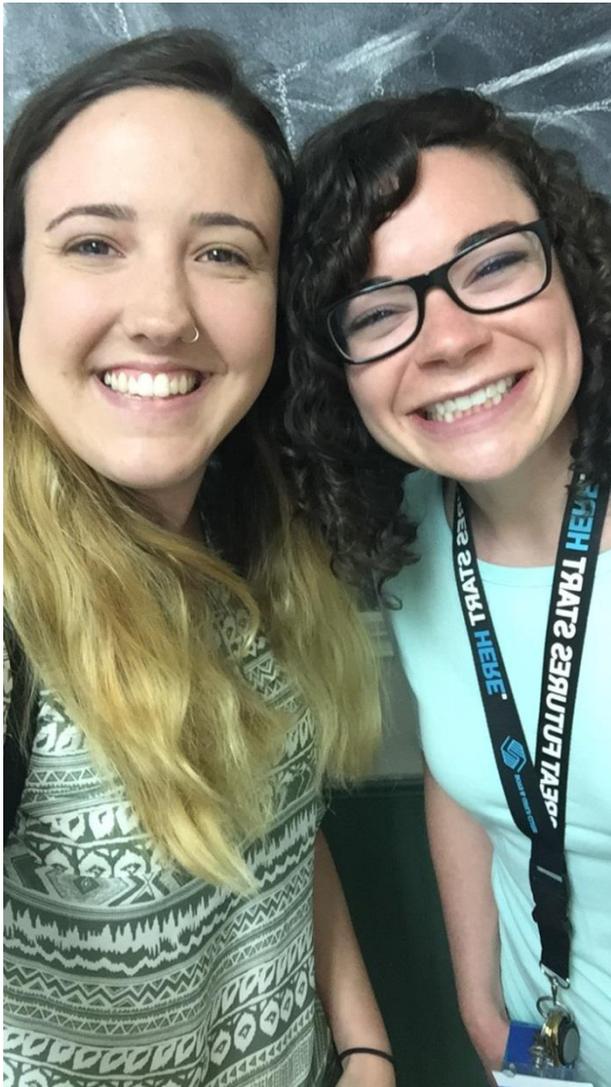
**PARTNER
PROFILE:**

The Boys and Girls Club of Portland

Inukai Family Club

Hillsboro, Oregon

by Melissa Habit



Meet Rachel Schultz (formerly Rachel Parker)

Rachel was recently promoted from Inukai Family Club Director, now Area Director of Youth & Family Services and The Inukai Family Club for the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Portland Metropolitan Area. She's a dynamo who began her career teaching in the Portland area. During her time as an educator, Rachel discovered that youth experience many challenges before setting a foot into the classroom. She realized that these issues need to be addressed so children can be available and present in their learning environment. This is not a new phenomenon, however, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation KIDS COUNT Data Book shows a growing need for change not only in Washington County but in communities across the country.

After about five years teaching, Rachel moved to Willimantic, Connecticut, where she was introduced to intervention programming. She started working with middle school youth and HIV-positive adults, programming for whom is housed in the same department and residential area. The extent of problems in the region, such as cyclical drug use, constant traumatic experiences and generational poverty among adults and youth, opened Rachel's eyes to how unsafe environments can affect all members of the community.

With this experience and education in mind, Rachel moved back to the west coast. While applying for jobs, she discovered the Boys and Girls Club (BGC) of Portland. As she gathered information about BGC's history, mission, and goals, she found an interest in the fact that BGC is a social service agency that focuses on youth and developing youth from high risk and at risk neighborhoods, functioning much like a community center. Rachel applied for the job and was offered the position of Youth and Family Services Supervisor. Her role gave her the opportunity to manage cases for at risk families and youth, to perform check-ins with club members, to look for resources and referrals, and to correspond with the school systems. Two

years later, she was promoted to Club Director, and she worked to expand the Youth and Family Services Program to all no matter where they come from or what situations they encounter. “Prosocial support and trauma informed care are good for all kids,” Rachel comments.

As Director, Rachel has many goals for the future. She sees the need for hard work in order to inspire change within the area and the state because there is currently exposure to many negative outcomes. Rachel stays involved with groups in the area, including Washington County’s public health department, the juvenile justice department, and police departments, to form solid partnerships. A concerted effort between all community



organizations is needed for a systemic change. Informed by the Annie E. Casey Foundation’s Data Book and community health and needs assessments, people can have a knowledgeable snapshot of what is going on in the community. For BGC, a community-centered approach sets the foundation for the Club and its model moving forward.

The Boys and Girls Club

The Boys and Girls Club is structured around community needs and proactively

works to address those needs by being not only a pillar of support but by performing assessments through an active dialogue within neighborhoods that need extra help and resources for their youth and families. Rachel encourages an approach much like what she witnessed on the east coast in

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programs such as the Carrera Program and the Harlem Children’s Zone. “These programs have an incredible way of uniting a community by focusing on identifying needs and ‘picking themselves up’ all together,” Rachel explains. “The Boys and Girls Clubs are designed so they provide trauma informed care no matter what the children experience, putting into place programs that will leave kids in a better place than when they started.”

In addition to general Club programs, the Clubs offer personalized strategies if there is an additional need.

All curricula are designed and tailored in a way that instills and builds resilience in youth even if

“What it comes down to is the fact that we are all serving the same people—we are those people,” Rachel emphasizes.

members of the Club are only there to create art, learn about computer programs, or to play in the gym. When they leave they have more resources within themselves and their families to get through challenging situations. As BGC continues to grow and be successful in communities, leadership and staff keep in mind that there are still other factors that need to be tackled, which is where a coalition between cities and organizations becomes imperative. “What it comes down to is the fact that we are all serving the same people—we are those people,” Rachel emphasizes. “Communities must decide that they want something different, something better.”

Inukai Family Club

Offering many of the same general programs and summer camps as other Boys and Girls Clubs, the Inukai Family Club goes above and beyond in Washington County by providing the area’s only teen summer camps: L. E. A. D. and L. I. T. This summer, the Club offers youth and adolescent camps for eight weeks filled with variety of activities: arts, athletics, games, engineering, and

cooking. Camps range in cost from \$20-\$65 per week, with the exception of L.I.T., which is \$100 for the summer. In order to sign up, youth and adolescents must be members of the club. On school days, the Club is open right after school, when youth are released, up until 7:00pm. The Hillsboro School District sends all buses to the Club. On non-school days, the Club is open all day. Teen events are also held Friday and Saturday nights. The Club sees about 230 members a day during the school year. This year, there are four staff members who are graduates of the Inukai Family Club. Staff attended four of the Club's high school seniors' graduations. Director of Teen Programs, Amanda Mondragon, was able to acquire scholarships to the university that she attended. One employee graduated with her teaching degree and still comes back every summer to work with the members. Rachel says, "When you're here, you're a part of our family."



One member, a teen in the program, was working on his senior project but needed a glue stick to complete it. He walked a few miles to the Club, entered Rachel's office, and asked to borrow one; then he walked the few miles back home. Although he did not attend the Club regularly, he has been a member since he was age six, and he knew that the Club would be there for him. He still comes to visit.

Another teen arrived around the time when the Teen Center first opened, walked in, and asked Rachel for help. She remembered coming to the Club when she was younger, and she did not know if it was still there. She left her home in another state and traveled by bus directly to the Club. Rachel and the other staff gathered clothing,

shoes, and food for her. She was able to find a ride to see some people she knew. She still drops in to

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say hello, and she recently visited

because she was in need of clothes for a job interview. Though she never became a member, she was a part of the BGC family and a "club kid" as soon as she walked through the doors that day.

The Inukai Family Club extends help and offers support when it is needed, and its influence can be seen from the members who attend generation after generation. "It never ceases to amaze me how far the reach of the BGC is and how many lives it's touched," Rachel joyfully concludes.



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About this story: Melissa Habit is a recent college graduate volunteering with Washington County Kids as a freelance journalist.

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