The King County Library System Foundation (KCLS Foundation) creates opportunities to bring literacy, learning and library access to all members of our diverse community.

The KCLS Foundation extends the library’s ability to meet the needs of our community members, to be innovative and to be relevant to residents who have an expansive range of interests, languages and cultures.

King County Library System spans 2,300 square miles and serves 1.3 million people through 46 libraries and an extensive array of online services and community outreach programs. In 2010, KCLS was the busiest public library in the United States, with 22.4 million items checked out. It was a banner year for the library with 31 million web visits and 10.2 million people who visited their local library.

For its extensive work in anticipating and meeting community needs, KCLS was named Library of the Year in 2011 by Library Journal, which noted: “The innovations and programs, the creative management of KCLS resources, the ability to stretch but still serve the principles and core values of librarianship, the strong public support, and the vision for the system’s future makes it clear that KCLS more deserving than ever to be named Library of the Year.”

The KCLS Foundation provides funding for new programs that address community needs and for value-added resources and support that help KCLS extend services in the libraries, online and through outreach in our communities.

In 2010, nearly 200,000 children and adults participated in KCLS Foundation-supported programs. Highlights this year include sponsorship of the Take Time to Read program and funding for the Library2Go! book collections.

Literacy: Encouraging Readers of All Ages

Literacy is the entry pass to society, culture, and quality of life. These programs provide opportunities to enhance literacy for young children and for adults in our community.

Reading to and with young children is one of the most effective ways parents can support brain development and early learning skills. In 2010, the KCLS Foundation continued to support the Ready to Read program with funding for Fiestas de Alfabetización, which provides Early Literacy training to Spanish-speaking parents. The program involved 1,226 parents in the workshop series and 1,533 children participated in the programs, an increase of 56% participation over the previous year.

The KCLS Foundation provided support for the Books for Babies program. Public Health Nurses delivered 3,500 board books in seven languages, Early Literacy DVDs and reading tips to new mothers in low income areas of the county.

Generous donors provided $80,000 in funding for books for opening day collections in the four new Library2Go! vans. In 2010, Library2Go! made 444 visits to childcare, senior and community centers, serving 4,055 residents. The majority of the visits were to in-home day care centers, offering caregivers easy access to collections and delighting thousands of children with books and stories.

The KCLS Foundation provided funding for Citizenship Classes, including free workbooks for participants. Citizenship Classes were presented to 1,766 immigrants seeking preparation for the U.S. Naturalization Test.
Learning: Enhancing the Pursuit of Knowledge

These programs motivate the improvement of reading and comprehension skills and encourage the pursuit of knowledge.

The popular Summer Reading Program, Make a Splash – Read! attracted 47,039 young readers and rewarded 24,104 readers for reaching their 1,000-minute goal, an 8% increase over the previous year. In addition to general support, the KCLS Foundation provided funding for buses to bring 3,041 summer school students to libraries for summer reading programs and activities.

Reading skills are vital to academic achievement, especially in the early grades. Ready, Set, Read! challenges kids to set goals and establish the reading habit. Eighteen school districts promote the program in elementary grades. In 2009-2010, the Foundation provided 12,676 books to students who completed their 400-minute goal, a 26% increase over the previous school year.

The Global Reading Challenge combines great books and quiz show questions in a fun and fast-paced contest. In 2010-11, 1,757 fourth- and fifth-grade students on 251 teams from 11 school districts competed in these challenging “battle of the books” competitions, a 5% increase in students over the previous year. The program encourages students to work together as a team and the competitions are spirited, with the motto You Always Win When You Read a Book!

Students seeking help with homework can visit Study Zones in nearly all libraries. Volunteers contributed more than 10,128 hours and tutored 6,796 students in Math, Science, Social Studies, English and Reading in 2010, a 14% increase over the previous year. KCLS offers the largest volunteer homework help program of any public library in the United States.

In 2010, the Foundation funded SAT prep classes for 352 students in South King County. The KCLS Foundation also provided workbooks for each participant.

In 2010, 5,321 teens read 28,557 books in the Read Three, Get One Free program. For each set of three reviews, a teen selected a free book as a reward (total of 8,859 books distributed). The KCLS Foundation also provided prizes for the Read • Flip • Win contest, which involved scores of teens who filmed book reviews and trailers.
Libraries: Reaching Out, Enhancing Access

Outreach programs bring in visitors, many of whom are experiencing the public library for the first time. These programs enhance the patron experience and encourage repeat visits.

Believing that reading is transformational, the KCLS Foundation provided funding for Take Time to Read, an innovative program that encourages adults to read whenever they have a few minutes. Nearly 2,000 adults participated in the Winter Reading Program, and thousands viewed 100 mega-sized Book Posters in eight communities and attended programs in libraries. Special Reading Chairs and Quick Reads Shelves were set up in retail outlets, medical facilities, at the Department of Licensing and other such busy places. Free Gift of Time cards were distributed throughout the community encouraging taking advantage of reading moments. Take Time to Read will be an expanded program in 2011 and 2012.

Thanks to Microsoft for awarding The KCLS Foundation a $500,000 grant for software at its new store opening event on November 18 at Bellevue Square. KCLS Director Bill Ptacek, left, thanked Microsoft and COO Kevin Turner, right, for the donation and noted that KCLS is pleased to be the company’s “home” library.

The KCLS Foundation sees significant value in building a new generation of librarians who will serve our community in the decades ahead. The KCLS Foundation provided five Scholarships for KCLS staff members seeking their masters' degrees in library and information science.

The KCLS Foundation supported Hello House! programs for children and parents on emergency preparedness and energy savings. Nearly 2,000 participants enjoyed this unique program created by popular performer Nancy Stewart, which featured songs, sets, stories and activities that engaged children and adults in learning more about these vital topics.

The KCLS Foundation welcomed nearly 1,000 visitors to new library preview events at the Kent, Sammamish, Lake Hills and Federal Way Libraries. The Foundation presented awards to members of Friends of the Library groups and hosted more than 100 guests at the annual Friends of the Library recognition event.

The KCLS Foundation’s annual Literary Lions Gala event, held at the Bellevue Library, welcomed 400 guests, featured including keynote speaker Richard Russo and emcee Nancy Pearl and lauded the outstanding work of 30 local authors.

KCLS Director Bill Ptacek, Richard Russo, KCLSF Foundation Director Jeanne Thorsen, Nancy Pearl and KCLS Foundation President Kathryn Brown.
Libraries Transform Lives

Libraries are wondrous places to explore, with miles of books and an abundant array of resources to excite minds with ideas and information. Libraries provide opportunities for our family, friends, colleagues and neighbors to access vital resources to launch new projects and businesses, chart new career paths and to help us find our way in these challenging times. Libraries change – and transform – lives. As the KCLS Foundation celebrates 20 years of funding innovative programs, community activities and special collections, we thank you for your support.

Our Vision

A community of avid readers and eager learners served by a public library that offers abundant learning opportunities for everyone. A community of lifelong learners that turns to and relies on the public library for inspiration and information.

A library that overflows with intellectual adventures, innovative programs and incredibly easy access to information. A library that is a vibrant and relevant component of our community.

Our Mission

The King County Library System Foundation promotes literacy, learning and libraries by providing support beyond public funding for initiatives and resources that enable the King County Library System to better serve the needs of our community.

Your Gifts Support Your Library and Your Community


The KCLS Foundation receives designated workplace gifts through the Coalition for Charitable Choice, King County Employee Giving Program, King County Library System Workplace Giving Campaign, Microsoft Giving Campaign, TRUIST, United Way of King County and Washington State Combined Fund Drive. We greatly appreciate this community support for literacy and lifelong learning.

The KCLS Foundation welcomes gifts of cash and pledges, honor and memorial gifts, in-kind gifts, stocks, bonds, bequests and planned gifts.

In 2010 the Foundation received $849,611 in contributions and pledges. The Foundation distributed $542,707 in support of library programs and activities and spent $414,197 on management and fundraising costs.

The KCLS Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization. Gifts to the KCLS Foundation are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law.

The KCLS Foundation appreciates and acknowledges the generous corporate, foundation and community support provided through contributions of Board leadership, financial resources and in-kind services.

Leave A Legacy

You can transform lives by leaving a legacy for literacy, learning and libraries and by including the KCLS Foundation in your will or estate plan. Your legacy gift can benefit your favorite community library, provide future funding for books in the collection, ensure quality programming for children, teens and adults, or fund innovative pilot projects.

There many creative ways to fulfill your charitable goals. You can leave cash, stocks, savings bonds, real estate and/or life insurance policies. And, by naming the KCLS Foundation as the primary or contingent beneficiary of your retirement assets, you can provide for the future through tax-advantaged strategies.

We welcome the opportunity to talk about your dreams for creating a community of readers and learners. For more information, contact Cindy Sharek, Director of Major Gifts, at 425.369.3225, cjsharek@kcls.org or visit our website at www.kclsfoundation.org.
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