

## Inclusive Technology of Washington: Past, Present, and Future

On October 4<sup>th</sup>, supporters of Inclusive Technology of Washington (ITW) met to celebrate where we have come from, our current impact on the region, as well as our hopes for the future!



There is much to applaud about our journey thus far! In the first year of our becoming a non-profit organization (in July of 2024), **we have taught 192 students over 9 locations, providing a cumulative of 4,194 student learning hours!** During these hours, students have learned how to advocate for themselves, advance their tech skills, and connect with their community!

One of the culminations of our work was the **creation of a video by four interns with our organization, all of whom have a disability** of some type. Each brought to the project their areas of strength and together created an amazing tribute to not only the impact we have made on the lives of underserved communities, but also to the importance of lifting the voices of those who are often not heard from in our communities! The elevation of those voices is at the core of what ITW is all about. At the end of this article, you will find a link to this short, 6-minute video!



Also on October 4<sup>th</sup> we celebrated everyone who has joined us on this journey, including our Chief Executive Officer and Program Manager Kira Sorensen, and our amazing instructors including Anwar Beleku and our most recent addition to our instructor team, Kendal Holzman! We are also thankful for the amazing board of directors who are at the top of their field in diverse areas of study, and over a dozen dedicated volunteers who have helped make this happen! And we awarded Aryan Zarekar as our first annual **“Volunteer of the Year”** for all his hard work as classroom assistant, media and newsletter team member, and coding and tech team volunteer!

The name of the fundraiser luncheon was “Bright Futures,” and we certainly have hopes for a bright future not only for the under-served communities that we reach through technology instruction, but for the world at large! We believe that all the more in times like these, elevating the voices of those whom society has traditionally under-valued is an important step towards the **healing of our world**. The members of these communities have so much to offer the world in terms of basic human caring and compassion... and can serve to be a “leveling ground” for anyone who might see themselves as “above” others. We are all endowed by our creator with the basic right to be heard, and by elevating the voice of “the least of these,” we can truly make the world a better place!





Our hope is that in the NEXT 12 months, we will serve over 250 students at 11 locations, providing at least 5,000 student learning hours. This is a tall order, given the fact that **one of our major donors has cut back** on their ability to keep this mission moving forward. Although we have several grant applications “in the works,” there is no guarantee that they will be accepted, and it would take every single one of them to be approved for us to be able to keep the programming we currently have without other additional sources of revenue. Which basically means that

if even one of these grant applications falls through, there would be one or more programs or locations which would be in jeopardy of closing.

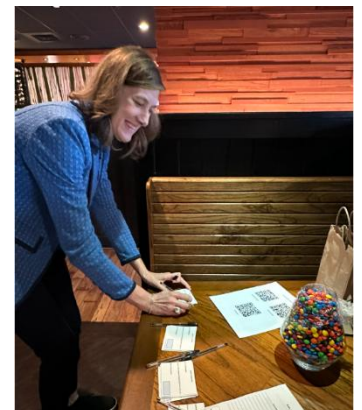
And so, ITW is seeking to broaden our sources of revenue, in order to not only be able to maintain our existing programming, but to broaden our reach and impact! And that is where each of you can help! I know it may seem daunting, but I believe that **each and every one of you can play SOME role** in helping us to meet our goals! Here are examples of ways in which you can help...



Personal recurring donations: This is a very basic way in which to help that reaps obvious tangible benefits! A recurring donation of \$50 per month pays one month of one student’s “bridge funds” to bridge the gap between the revenues we can bring in for that one student compared to the cost per student to run our programs. And \$500 per month (which is a sponsorship level) keeps the doors open at one of the six locations we are operating at. At this last fundraiser we held on October 4<sup>th</sup>, we brought in \$3,000 of funds. But the vast majority of these donations were

on a one-time basis for the event only. We currently have only \$255 per month of pledged donations. If instead we had \$3,000 per month of recurring pledged donations, we would have everything we needed to keep our doors open at our six current locations, even if none of our grant applications were approved! Please refer to the link at the bottom of this article to donate. And when you make the donation, please make sure to switch the settings from “One Time” donation to “Monthly.”

Corporate sponsorships and additional grant funding: Corporations look strongly to their base of employees to drive the direction of what types of sponsorships they engage in. Further, most grants are awarded to organizations who already have an “in” with the grant writers, and are often directly invited by the grant writers to apply. That is where each of you could potentially assist. Do you work for or are affiliated with any corporations that provide sponsorships to non-profits? Or do you know of any grants that might fit what we do? If so, can you help me connect with a decision maker within the leadership so that I might turn in an application for funding? If so, please click on the link at the bottom of this article to contact me (Ruth) about this.



We had a great example of this occur just this week. I met someone recently and told them about ITW,



and it turned out that they had experience assisting a different non-profit in receiving donated computers from the Gates Foundation. As a result of them helping me make the connection, we are now on track to receive THIRTY donated computers from the Gates Foundation as well! We also have another connection that may be able to connect us with 5-7 additional computers! If we could make this same type of progress with monetary contributions, that would be fabulous!

Even if people work for a corporation that donates to non-profits whenever their employees volunteer with the non-profit... that could be a recurring source of revenue for us as well!

“Earned Income.” ITW receives a significant amount of income that is “earned” per se, such as payments from the Developmental Disabilities Administration, and a small number of students paying a modest amount on a private pay basis. There are ways even within this revenue model to make our “bottom line” to show “less red ink.” Do you know of people who would benefit from our classes to whom you



could refer them to us? The more people we have at any given location, the more efficient our time is, which spreads out our administrative costs over more people. Do you know of someone who could volunteer with us at classes as a classroom assistant? That also can help us increase our class sizes, which increases our net “earned income.” Or do you know of someone who would want to intern with us for some of our administrative tasks? It is a great way for that person to learn tech skills, and also for us to accomplish more with our limited administrative resources.



As you can see, there are **many ways in which each of you can help!** And we literally cannot do this without all of your help! Together we can build a bright future... not only for our students, but for the world around us!

*Ruth Bacha*

Board President of inclusive Technology of Washington



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