

Gates Foundation Awards \$4.5 Million to Expand Housing and Services for Homeless

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The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has announced more than \$4.5 million in grants to the Sound Families Initiative to expand housing and services for families in the Seattle area that are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

The eleven grants, which nearly fulfill the foundation's \$40 million commitment to the initiative, will fund 180 units of affordable supportive housing in King, Pierce, and Snohomish counties through twelve organizations, including the Church Council of Greater Seattle, Family Services of King County, Helping Hand House, the Tacoma Rescue Mission, Intercommunity Mercy Housing, and the YWCA of Seattle-King County-Snohomish County. The grants include \$1.7 million to build seventy-four units in King County, \$1.1 million for forty-four units in Pierce County, and \$1.7 million for sixty-two units in Snohomish County.

Created in 2000, the initiative has reached its goal of tripling the amount of service-enriched housing in the region. According to initial data collected by the University of Washington's School of Social Work, two-thirds of the families that completed the Sound Families program found permanent housing and saw their employment rates and incomes rise.

"In the past six years, thousands of families in our region have moved successfully to stable, permanent housing thanks to the good work of Sound Families grantees," said Katie Hong, co-chair of the Sound Families Initiative and interim director of Pacific Northwest giving for the Gates Foundation. "These organizations help put families back on the path to self-sufficiency by providing affordable housing paired with critical on-site services, such as job training, counseling, and life skills classes."

Kristy Geyer and her daughter, Summer Hebener, 2, watch a kids' program together in their Everett home Thursday evening. Geyer benefited from a Gates Foundation program that has provided millions of dollars for housing in Snohomish County.