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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**KING, PIERCE AND SPOKANE COUNTY NONPROFITS HONORED FOR  
THEIR HIGH QUALITY YOUTH PROGRAMS**

SEATTLE, WA – The Raikes Foundation today recognized 15 organizations in King, Pierce and Spokane counties for providing high quality out of school time programs to young people as part of its Youth Program Quality Initiative (YPQI).

The Youth Program Quality Initiative supports programs serving young people ages 10-18. It helps organizations and their staffs improve youth engagement, which in turn helps kids improve academic performance, develop social skills and avoid risky behaviors.

“Thousands of kids in Washington State participate in out of school time programs every day, but the quality of the programs and their staffs varies widely,” said Erin Kahn, director of the Raikes Foundation. “The Youth Program Quality Initiative raises the caliber of after school programs by improving the capacity of staff through data-driven professional development. When organizations understand what good looks like and have the tools to get there, quality rises and kids reap the benefits.”

Fourteen of the organizations were honored with a High Flier award for their programs reaching the highest bar of quality:

King County:

- Community for Youth
- InterIm
- Reel Grrls
- Renton Area Youth & Family Services
- Seattle Art Museum
- The Center for Wooden Boats
- Woodland Park Zoo

## Pierce County:

- Children's Home Society
- Oasis Youth Center
- Safe Streets – Youth Leading Change

## Spokane County

- City of Cheney Parks & Recreation
- Communities in Schools of Spokane County
- Odyssey Youth Board
- YMCA of the Inland Northwest

“The Youth Program Quality Initiative provides thorough training that helps the Community for Youth staff do its job better,” said Peter Retzlaff, executive director of Community for Youth. “It teaches us how to make our interactions with young people more constructive and enjoyable and helps young people get more out of our program.”

The Youth Program Quality Initiative provides up to three years of support for organizations selected through a competitive manner. Grants of \$5,000 are awarded to selected organizations for participation in the YPQI process that includes: participation in a peer learning community/cohort; completion of a program quality assessment using both a self-assessment and external assessors; staff training in youth development best practices; and onsite coaching and technical assistance.

The initiative also provides an important avenue for programs to meet the Washington State Quality Standards for Afterschool & Youth Development Programs, which were recently established as the common definition of quality statewide and are fully aligned to the initiative's focus areas.

Three of the 15 organizations were given Pinnacle awards for their commitment to the continuous quality improvement of their after-school programs, and will receive \$500 grants to support ongoing staff professional development. These organizations are:

- Seattle Art Museum (King County)
- Safe Streets (Pierce County)
- Gonzaga University's Center for Community Action & Service Learning (Spokane)

“When our program's quality goes up, kids benefit,” said Sherry Barrett, executive director of Communities in Schools of Spokane County. “Substantial research confirms that high quality youth development programs can make a positive difference in student achievement, social and civic skills and risk reduction. The key is how to improve quality. YPQI helps us do just that.”

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