



South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity DEI Work

South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity has partnered with RisewithKJ, LLC in its pursuit of becoming an anti-racist, pro-inclusive community organization. We are committed to engaging in an authentic process that is reflective of our core values.

We understand the power of aligning our words with our actions, of becoming a living example of what it means to serve. We are committed to centering “people” in all aspects of our work; centering the giving nature of our volunteers while actively advancing strategies to further diversify both staff and volunteer groups to better reflect the communities we serve.

At South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity, we acknowledge the painful history of legalized oppression and discriminatory practices in housing and intersecting industries. These practices resulted in preventing people of color from not only accessing desirable residential and commercial areas for rent but limited their purchase of homes and land. We value community and the relationships created there which are often sustained over generations. The stability our work offers to low-income families is one of the most powerful means we have of helping to transform communities. We believe that the most powerful definition of community is one which centers the multitude of differences amongst us all as the norm.

We recognize that we are uniquely positioned to walk in partnership with communities as we all seek to become more just, equitable, diverse and inclusive. We are helping to build legacies for individuals, families and communities. As we engage in efforts to increase diversity and foster a more inclusive atmosphere, we acknowledge the painful legacy of racism and discrimination and its impact on communities of color.

We began this year with a specific focus on becoming an anti-racist, pro-inclusive community service organization. We are moving forward with intentionality and working at a pace which allows for the highest level of participation from all of our staff. Our goal is to focus on the alignment of our stated mission with our organizational policies, behaviors and strategies. The work of diversity, equity and inclusion encourages us to answer the call of integrity.

Integrity has called us to “put God’s love into action” by engaging in conversations we may have never had before, engaging with people who may be very different from us, navigating hard conversations with new tools, and supporting the growth and education of one another as we take this journey together.

We have a dedicated team comprised of South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity leadership and DEI team members who are working closely with our consultants in the management and facilitation of this process. They, like you are both personally and professionally committed to raising awareness, cultivating cultural humility and advancing the pursuit of inclusive communities.

Our leadership and DEI team were asked to share their **personal and professional race equity goals** during this journey and what **success** would look like to them. Below are some examples (slightly modified to maintain confidentiality) which capture the spirit, energy and commitment underpinning this work:

Overcome subconscious learned bias that can affect my conscious decisions in all interactions that I have with others.

Find a stronger voice for myself to ask questions when something doesn't make sense to me, and to push back when I know someone is behaving inappropriately.

Personally, my goal is to make it a habit of mine to address/approach/view all interactions personally/professionally through a fair equity lens. I also hope/want to be outward with my practice and speak about it with my child. I hope my child picks up on this habit and in return, he does this naturally at every opportunity he has. I want it to be second nature for myself and him.

I would like to see us as a whole organization be viewed as leaders in the community, not only the Thurston County community but also the Habitat community. I am also looking forward to having DEI conversations/practices show up on the construction site. Not that our site is bad or anything, I just feel that the entire construction industry desperately needs a "facelift" when it comes to what is correct behavior and what is not. I am looking forward to being a leader in that way and hope other construction sites will see how this change is necessary and the entire construction industry starts making a change. I know, big dream, but I remain hopeful. Lastly, I am looking forward to when our community members, all members, not just philanthropists donate to us on a regular basis.

I would like to see the fear removed from exploring this work.

If I come through this experience different from when I started, and with ideas that are actionable, I will feel successful.

Knowing that we are equitable in all of our decision making, policies and hiring practices. Seeing the diversity in our organization, volunteers, staff and board.

That we have a staff, board, volunteers that represent our diverse community, that we value diversity and celebrate different perspectives to be a stronger organization.

As a non-profit organization that focuses on the proven, positive impact of homeownership/equity, we are committed to strengthening the community, by strengthening those in the community. We do this by examining mistakes from the past, the uncertainty and division in the present, and the future that could be. South Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee is engaging in the responsibility and processes of such examinations in order to improve the lives of everyone in Thurston County. We aim to dispel myths and misconceptions with facts and awareness and remove the stigma of having frank and oftentimes difficult conversations. We do this not by tearing others down, but by lifting up those who are most often marginalized and misunderstood. This work is not exclusionary, and will benefit you, your neighbors, and your community as a whole. We hope you will engage with us in this work.