



treehouse

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

About Treehouse

Treehouse is Washington's leading nonprofit organization addressing the essential education and enrichment needs of kids in foster care. The youth Treehouse serves struggle against tremendous odds: backgrounds of abuse and neglect, parental substance abuse, low incomes, and moves from foster home to foster home while in the care of the state. Treehouse helps 7,000 kids in foster care each year through programs that help them succeed in school, fulfill key material needs, and provide important childhood experiences every child deserves. Treehouse is dedicated to closing the achievement gap between foster children and their peers, and has set an ambitious goal that foster youth in King County will graduate from high school at the same rate as their peers with a plan for their future by 2017. Treehouse gives foster kids a childhood and a future.

Treehouse History

Treehouse was founded to help kids in foster care just be kids. In the late 1980s a group of DSHS caseworkers, frustrated by the lack of resources for extras for kids in their care, started raising money in their spare time to fund normal childhood experiences. Their small collection funded birthday presents and paid for extracurricular activities. In 1988, these volunteers teamed up with community leaders to create the Children's Fund, a public-private partnership that was later renamed Treehouse. With the help of generous donors, Treehouse hired its first staff members in 1993. These professionals devoted their attention to developing programs to meet the unique needs of children in foster care. Over time, these evolved into the current suite of enrichment and education programs and acquired a track record of success in helping children in foster care thrive – now and in the future. In its 28 years, Treehouse has grown tremendously, but its core has not changed. Treehouse is dedicated to leveling the playing field for youth in foster care. It is still a community effort that depends on the dedication and support of volunteers and donors.

How Treehouse Is Giving Foster Kids a Childhood and a Future

Today, Treehouse has a team of 100+ professionals addressing the specific educational needs and circumstances of 7,000 children and youth in foster care across Washington State. Treehouse accomplishes this through the following programs:

Academic Programs:

1) Graduation Success

Youth in foster care face an uphill battle to graduate high school due to school transitions, lack of basic skills, and emotional upheaval. Treehouse provides education planning, monitoring, and coaching support to build each youth's engagement and investment in their education and their future. Through weekly monitoring of risk indicators, personalized interventions, building problem solving and self-advocacy skills, proactively removing barriers to school success, and coordinating needed supports, Treehouse paves the way to high school graduation, hope and opportunity. Treehouse provides Graduation success education support services in King County and Spokane and Tacoma School Districts.

2) Educational Advocacy

Statewide, Treehouse Educational Advocates work with schools, social workers, foster families and youth in foster care to resolve difficult issues and remove barriers to kids' school success. Advocates are co-located in Children's Administration offices in every region of Washington State. Educational Advocates:

- help students access education-related support services, including special education
- prevent school changes when students' placements change and pave the way for seamless transitions when school changes are unavoidable
- minimize the effects of disciplinary actions that keep students out of school
- assist high school youth in making up credits when necessary and identifying alternative high school programs to stay engaged and on track to graduate
- train caregivers, social workers and students themselves to advocate for students' educational rights

The Essentials:

1) Little Wishes

The Treehouse Little Wishes program helps pay for activities that every child deserves to explore and enjoy. Treehouse provides access to extracurricular activities like sports, music, dance and clubs, as well as school activities for youth in foster care in King County and youth in our Graduation Success program. Research shows that kids who are positively engaged in school and community have better academic and life outcomes.

2) Summer Opportunities

Treehouse provides access to the summer experience of choice for King County kids in foster care, including overnight camps, day camps, leadership opportunities, summer school, and other summer programs. These summer experiences give kids in foster care a chance to get away from it all, make new friends and just be a kid and gives foster and relative caregivers much-needed time to recharge.

3) The Wearhouse

The Wearhouse is a free store located in Seattle where kids in foster care shop for new and like-new clothing, books, toys and other things to help them feel good and fit in. Eligible kids in foster care can shop up to six times each year including a special holiday shopping visit in December. Emergency visits can be arranged when children enter out-of-home placement.

4) Holiday Magic

The News Talk 97.3 KIRO FM Holiday Magic program helps kids in foster care have a happy holiday by raising resources from the community to provide each child in Washington State with one significant holiday gift. Kids with an open DSHS case in out-of-home care between October and December are eligible.