

# 2020 COMMUNITY

## IMPACT REPORT



 Columbia Bank



# Letter from the CEO

## 2020 COLUMBIA BANK

In any normal year, Columbia Bank employees make it a personal mission to help our communities. We volunteer to provide vital resources, services, and support to thousands of our neighbors throughout Washington, Oregon, and Idaho.

Of course, 2020 was anything but normal.

Yet, even in such a historically challenging year, our employees stepped up to extraordinary levels of partnership to help communities weather the global pandemic and the resulting economic challenges.

In these pages you will meet some of our remarkable team members and read stories of their personal dedication to their community, their compassion for those in need and their steadfast contribution during a year where it mattered most.

As a company, we responded to the pandemic by doubling down on our efforts to act as a hub of assistance throughout the Northwest. Whether it was raising our six-year total to nearly \$1.5 million for the Warm Hearts Winter Drive, which provides much needed winter clothing to those struggling with homelessness; empowering our nonprofit partners with greater flexibility to spend our contributions in ways that helped them address the pandemic; or donating more than \$500,000 to key COVID-19 relief organizations, our teams met the challenges of 2020 by adjusting our programs to ensure we served our communities in ways that would make an impact.

2020 also saw us launch a new campaign to help our clients join with us in philanthropic partnership. Columbia Bank's Pass It On program delivered more than \$600,000 in cash to more than 350 clients so they could perform a service for someone impacted by the pandemic. From coffee shops in Boise, to restaurants in Portland, to dentists in Tacoma, the Pass It On program created a grassroots movement through which local entrepreneurs directly helped their neighbors in need.

As in our previous community impact reports, I hope you will see the tremendous volunteer spirit of our employees. But more importantly this year, I hope you will see how our team members went to extraordinary lengths to uphold their commitment to make our communities better places to live and work.



**Clint Stein**

President and Chief  
Executive Officer

# 2020 Special Programs

In 2020, Columbia Bank invested in several special programs to support the quickly changing need of the communities we serve.

During the year's unprecedented events, adaptability was critical in supporting the many partners we work with across our footprint.



## OUR CURRENT PROGRAMS

1

### \$600,000 Pass it On Project for Small Business Recovery

Columbia paid over 350 small businesses to provide services for people whose lives were adversely impacted by COVID-19 or the economic downturn it caused.

3

### \$500,000 COVID-19 Community Relief Campaign

Distributed to 25 organizations across the Pacific Northwest that are working to provide relief to those impacted by COVID-19.

2

### \$100,000 Scholarship Fund for Students of Color

In partnership with the Tacoma Urban League, Urban League of Portland, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle and Spokane NAACP.

4

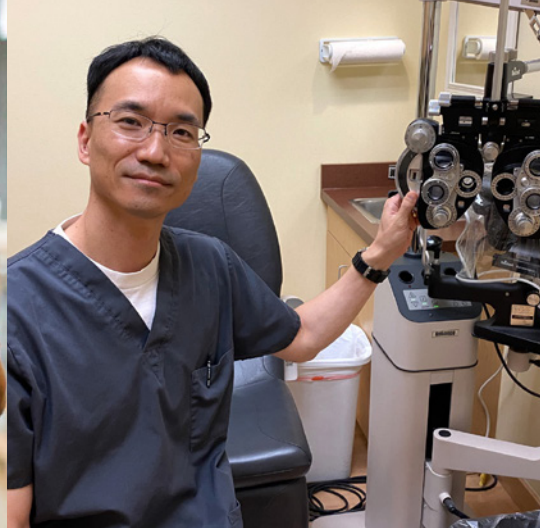
### \$25,000 Wildfire Relief Assistance

Contributed to American Red Cross to support impacted communities.

We're paying the bill.  
They're paying it forward

Pass   
It On  
Project

by Columbia Bank



# Pass It On Project Partners

Through the Pass It On Project, Columbia put more than \$600,000 in the hands of small businesses. The program was designed to create cascading impact by paying more than 350 small businesses across the Northwest to perform services for members of the community whose lives were adversely impacted by the pandemic or the economic downturn it caused. Services ranged from auto repairs and plumbing services to eye care and veterinary services.

“These are wonderful people who teach students that other institutions have given up on. With Columbia Bank footing the bill, we are going to make sure that these heroes get the comfort and support they so richly deserve.”

Emerald City Spinal Care provided chiropractic services to teachers at the InterAgency Academy in Seattle.

[Dr. Christine Zapata, Seattle, WA](#)



“These folks have had to work during the worst parts of the pandemic and with Columbia Bank’s help, I hope to provide a little color therapy to them.”

Sol & Serre provided free flowers to grocery store workers and postal workers.

[Sarah Harris Murphy, Wallace, ID](#)



“With Columbia Bank paying the bill, we are helping to reduce the growth in unwanted and un-cared for kittens in our community.”

Four Corners Veterinary Clinic provided resources to help cover the cost of spaying and neutering for the Cat Rescue Adoption Network.

[Jonathan Williams, Eugene, OR](#)



# Community Engagement Philosophy in Action

Our people are at the core of our community engagement programs, and their involvement is a powerful force towards improving and enhancing the places where they live and work.



1

## Volunteerism:

- 16,373 Volunteer Hours
- 736 Organizations Supported

Our people have 40 hours of paid volunteer time annually. This allows them to directly impact their communities with their time and unique skills, in the areas they care about most.

3

## Company Giving:

- \$3,598,021 Total Sponsorships & Contributions
- 1,102 Local Organizations Supported

Columbia Bank employees direct the majority of the company's charitable gifts to nonprofit partners. We support the organizations our employees are engaged with and passionate about.

2

## Fundraising:

- \$369,978 Total Fundraising
- \$35,902 Raised for American Heart Association
- \$315,025 Raised through Warm Hearts Winter Drive

We come together to raise funds for our communities by working in tandem with our clients, vendors, friends, and family. Columbia Bank supports annual fundraising campaigns for organizations like American Heart Association and American Cancer Society in addition to our own Warm Hearts Winter Drive.

4

## Employee Giving:

- \$140,588 Total Employee Giving
- \$25,870 Employee Donations Doubled by the Matching Gift Program

Many employees give generously via payroll deductions during our annual Employee Giving Campaign. Employees are further supported with a \$100 annual matching gift to enhance the impact they make to their favorite nonprofits.



# Warm Hearts Winter Drive

Columbia Bank's Warm Hearts Winter Drive was launched on December 1, 2015, to benefit homeless shelters in local communities across the Northwest. Since its inception, Columbia Bank has raised nearly \$1.5 million dollars and collected more than 45,000 items for over 60 shelters. 100% of the funds and winter wear collected are donated directly to shelters and relief organizations in the communities where they are collected.

1

TOTAL RAISED 2020:

**\$315,025**

2

TOTAL COLLECTED ITEMS:

**8,289**

3

SHELTERS SUPPORTED:

**60+**

4

TOTAL SPONSORSHIPS  
RAISED:**\$42,323**

5

TOTAL COLLECTED ITEMS  
IN 6 YEARS:**48,550**

6

TOTAL FUNDS RAISED  
IN 6 YEARS:NEARLY  
**\$1.5 MILLION**

“As a Warm Heart Winter Drive shelter partner, we are truly grateful for the generosity of Columbia Bank staff and customers.

With your support, Community Action's Family Shelter is providing local families who are experiencing homelessness with a safe and stable place to call home and supporting them on their journey to securing permanent housing of their own. Thank you for helping to make this incredibly important work possible!”

**Kristy Reddick**Corporate & Community Partnerships Manager,  
Community Action

# Highlighting Sustainability Efforts

Columbia Bank is committed to being a strong environmental steward of the beauty and resources of the Northwest. Our efforts are led by a cross-functional Core Sustainability Team that sets and accomplishes sustainability goals as part of a larger sustainability roadmap.

## Core Sustainability Team

Columbia Bank's Core Sustainability Team developed two new tools: a standards of conservation checklist for new builds and remodels, and a branch best practice conservation checklist.

We donated over 200 used technology items to Interconnect, a nonprofit that makes information and communication technology accessible to under-served communities around the world.

## Sustainability Workgroup

The Sustainability Workgroup created the framework for our Sustainability Council and Champion Network, which will roll out in 2021.

## Strategic Energy Management

We increased enrollment in the SEM Program from seven to nine branches in 2020. Enrolled branches recognized a total electric savings of 36,056 kWh, and natural gas savings of 834 therms.

## The People's EcoChallenge

Columbia Bank's team had 96 members who worked together to place 12th out of 467 teams. We were proud to be the top placing financial institution.



# Equity and Inclusion

Creating an equitable and inclusive workplace is not just right for our people – it's right for our clients and our communities. Diverse perspectives allow us to identify and remove barriers, making Columbia Bank more a more inclusive place where all can belong. At Columbia Bank, we are dedicated to supporting nonprofit partners that work with underrepresented communities.

We support these organizations through sponsorships and contributions, along with employee volunteerism efforts. In 2020, we donated over \$200,000 in special gifts to nonprofit organizations dedicated to serving BIPOC, women and girls, disabled people, and the LGBTQ+ communities.

Columbia Bank's Pass It On Project also supported many women- and BIPOC-owned small businesses by paying them to provide their services to those in need.

- BIPOC-owned businesses: 17% of funds spent
- Women-owned businesses: 44% of funds spent

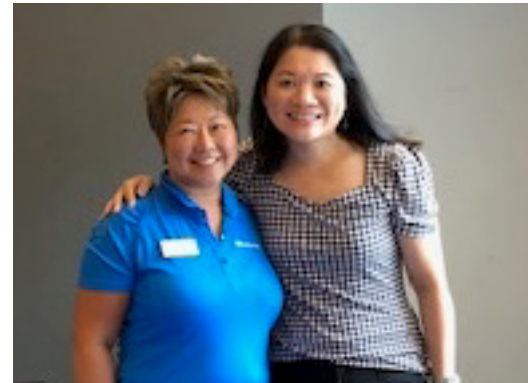


## STORIES

I am proud to volunteer at Asian Counseling and Referral Services (ACRS). As an Asian American myself, I relate to its mission of promoting social justice and the well-being and empowerment of Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders and other underserved communities – including immigrants, refugees, and American-born – by developing, providing and advocating for innovative, effective, and efficient community-based multilingual and multicultural services. I previously served on the board of directors and love continuing to support this group as a volunteer.

### Christine Liu, Bellevue, WA

SVP, Commercial Banking Officer



With Columbia Bank by our side, Northwest Association for Blind Athletes was able to pivot the organization's traditional in-person programming to virtual. These services helped connect individuals with visual impairments with opportunities to build confidence, community, friendships, and the skills, tools, and resources to reach their greatest potential. We are extremely grateful to Columbia Bank for believing in our mission and partnering to make 2020 one of our best years yet.

### Billy Henry

Founder, President/CEO of Northwest Association for Blind Athletes



# OUR PEOPLE



We're pleased to share stories of our impact during our most recent year of community giving as told by those who created that impact:

**OUR EMPLOYEES.**

# Remembering the Past to Help the Future

ALEXANDER ARRUDA

For Alexander Arruda, client care team lead for Columbia Bank in Eugene, Oregon, the story of his family – especially his grandparents – is one of tremendous challenge. At the root of that challenge was one overriding obstacle: they could not speak the language of the country to which they immigrated.

**“Growing up, I heard stories of the struggles of my grandparents and great grandparents who were not able to speak the majority language of the country they lived in, and were also never given a real opportunity to learn.”**

These stories have been a driving force of why Arruda is a board member, treasurer, and fundraiser for Downtown Languages, a nonprofit in Eugene that helps people, especially from the Latino community, learn English, prepare for their citizenship test, driver’s license testing, and more. “Obviously, I’m passionate about helping immigrants to this country and the fact that Downtown Languages goes so far in trying to provide this valuable education to people is incredible to me.”

In addition to his skills as a banker, Alexander brings another critical perspective to the organization. “I think I am able to utilize my experiences in life to bring a different perspective to our board, specifically regarding current world events,” he says. “I am also the only current board member who speaks Spanish – the first language of many of our students. This has allowed me to get to know several of our students in a way that many other board members have not.”



That connection to students is also one of Arruda’s favorite aspects of his work with Downtown Languages. “I love when I am able to sit in on one of our classes. It’s an amazing thing to see a group of people, from all different backgrounds, learn a new language and share their stories. I was able to sit in on one of our English conversation classes, and just acting as an observer gave me a brand-new insight into what it is we do for people.”

As such an active volunteer, Arruda also deeply appreciates the support he gets from Columbia Bank. “It’s huge that the bank gives everyone so much paid time to volunteer,” he says, “but even more is just the overall support and encouragement to volunteer. I’ve never missed a board meeting, because Columbia wants me to never miss a board meeting.”

Alexander Arruda is using his skills and passion to help many immigrants face fewer obstacles than his grandparents and great grandparents had to endure in the past.

# Passing On the Volunteer Spirit

AMANDA MOLONEY

Amanda Moloney, commercial banking specialist for Columbia Bank in Yakima, Washington, first got involved with the Yakima Humane Society as part of a group volunteer event during the bank's signature community effort - the Melanie Dressel Community Commitment Week. At first, she thought it would be just a fun and rewarding opportunity to give back. Little did she know at the time that it would soon become an amazing and enduring journey for her and her daughter.

"I showed up at the Humane Society with a few colleagues and we helped the staff walk dogs for the day," says Moloney. "All the while I was thinking how much my daughter would enjoy this as well. As soon as I got home, I told her about it and she became so excited!"

In little time, Moloney became an active volunteer at the shelter with her daughter, and soon they were fostering animals in need. "Being a foster parent to animals is one of the most amazing experiences I have ever had," she adds.

**"During COVID-19, my daughter and I took care of a mama dog and her three pups for a couple of months, and I cannot describe how truly wonderful it was for the both of us."**

Moloney's trajectory with the Humane Society soon moved to the next level as they asked her to join the board of directors. "Being on the board allows me to really help preserve and protect the financial well-being of the organization, as well as help set the overall direction," says Moloney. "The Humane Society does



so much to not only help end animal cruelty and over population, but they provide critical education to the entire community."

Today, Moloney is heavily involved in almost every aspect of the Humane Society including volunteering, fostering, and helping lead the organization's fundraising efforts. "I'm so fortunate that Columbia Bank provides employees the time and support to volunteer. The bank empowers all employees to go out and make the community a better place to live and work and I always feel my leader's encouragement."

So, if you are in Yakima and see a mother and daughter walking a dog - or five - it might just be the Moloneys sharing a treasured moment of volunteering together.

# A Passion for Financial Literacy

## AUTUMN POLAT

Autumn Polat, NeighborHub Relationship Banker for Columbia Bank in Seattle, Washington was certainly not born a banker. “Like many people, I had little or no financial literacy when I was younger,” she says. “That’s probably why I’m as passionate as I am to help teach people financial literacy and show them its power.”

While involved in many volunteer activities, Polat is most engaged in the Columbia Bank Upper Puget Sound Financial Literacy Committee that teaches financial education to children of all ages. In addition to this internal committee, Polat is a key volunteer with the Renton Innovation Zone Partnership. This nonprofit provides financial education in neighborhoods and community centers to help spread the message of financial independence. Polat and the group hand out resources for people in need and provide financial education packets to help increase their monetary knowledge.

**“For me, teaching people how to take control of their financial lives is just about the best thing I can do for my community. With that knowledge, people can make much better decisions and live a better life.”**



As a member of Columbia Bank’s financial literacy committee, Polat also helped teach the teachers. The committee provides education and resources so that the bank’s employees can help others become more financially literate.

“What’s truly amazing about working at Columbia Bank is that every single volunteer activity I’ve ever wanted to do, my leaders said yes,” says Polat. “I am always fully supported by my managers and the bank as a whole. In fact, it’s not just that they say yes, it’s that they actively encourage me to keep doing more.”

With that support and encouragement, Autumn Polat will continue to passionately spread the message about the power of financial literacy.

# When Volunteerism is Deeply Personal

CRYSTAL ANDERSON

For Crystal Anderson, relationship banking assistant for Columbia Bank in Vancouver, Washington, the fight against the insidious disease of Multiple Sclerosis is deeply personal.

**“I lost my grandma to MS, and I vowed to be a part of the solution so that no one else would ever have to lose a loved one to this disease.”**

What is also personal to Anderson is her personal commitment to doing the difficult and time-consuming work to help the Multiple Sclerosis Society continue their mission. “I have been a volunteer for several years and worked my way up toward managing some of the Society’s biggest fundraisers like the MS Run and MS Bike events. The Bike event, for example, is a three-day fundraiser that take a huge amount of coordination and skill to make sure it is a success.”

The local MS Society chapter took notice of Anderson’s diligence and hard work. This year, the executive director asked her to join their board of trustees and take on an even larger role in determining the direction of the Society. As it turned out, inviting Anderson to join the board in 2020 would bring immediate results.

“Like many organizations, the challenge of COVID-19



impacted the MS Society,” says Anderson. “We had to transition the MS Bike event to a virtual fundraiser and try and find other ways to solicit donations.”

Seeing the problem, Anderson went to Columbia Bank and asked for a significant donation to help make up for the projected shortfall in funding. “Columbia has always supported my volunteerism, and I was optimistic they would strongly consider the additional funding,” says Anderson. “Of course they did, and their donation helped turn the event into a much better opportunity. I feel so fortunate to work for Columbia Bank and work for an organization which – like me – sees a need and looks for a way to make a real difference.”

# OUR VISION



# Showing the Way

DEBRA WAINWRIGHT

The mantra of United Way is to “Live United,” and perhaps no one better exemplifies this spirit more than Debra Wainwright, vice president and branch loan officer for Columbia Bank in Hermiston, Idaho.

“Simply put, it’s never one person trying to do good. It’s all of us working together toward the common goal of helping others.”

Wainwright is a bit of a Super Volunteer when it comes to helping out in her community. She is a leading fundraiser for the United Way of The Blue Mountains which serves Morrow, Columbia, Umatilla, and Walla Walla counties. She has helped the organization manage critical fundraising events such as their golf tournament which in turn funds entities and nonprofits providing the full range of services from at-risk youth to vulnerable seniors.

“What I love most about working with United Way is that your efforts get amplified to help so many people in the community,” says Wainwright. “Funds raised for the United Way go toward other critical organizations like the Salvation Army, Senior Companions and Campus Life, just to name a few.”



Despite being a remarkably busy banking professional, Wainwright always finds the time for her volunteer work and credits Columbia Bank’s commitment toward community giving.

“I work for the perfect employer for someone like me,” she says. “I have a strong need to help others, and I work for Columbia Bank, which greatly believes and actively promotes employee volunteerism. We all get 40 hours of paid volunteer time each year, and the bank makes its incredibly easy and fun to put teams of volunteers together to go out and make our community a better place.”

Whether it’s helping clients at work, or volunteering at every opportunity, Debra Wainwright truly lives the united way.

# Resources are Great, Education is Even Better

ELENA FRACCHIA

Elena Fracchia, assistant vice president and wealth advisor for Columbia Bank in Eugene, Oregon is a great believer in financial education. She knows that having resources is only half the equation, and that having the knowledge to preserve and grow those resources is even more important.

This philosophy is a leading reason why she is a passionate volunteer and supporter for Neighborhood Partnerships, an organization that provides the resources necessary for low income people to buy their first home, start a business or go to school – and also teaches the financial literacy needed to sustain success.

**“I’ve learned that everyone can be successful with the right combination of resources and education. What Neighborhood Partnerships does is combine a financial head start with the teachings necessary to make sure their clients have what they need to achieve financial independence.”**

Columbia Bank has been a long-time supporter of Neighborhood Partnerships. The bank is a key sponsor of its RE: Conference which helps provide the organization’s professional partners with additional financial education that they can pass on to clients.



“The bank is a true partner in the community because it does so much more than just give out dollars,” says Fracchia. “Columbia Bank’s giving strategy is really a three-legged stool of support: they fully underwrite employee volunteerism, they provide an employee match of donations, and they provide direct support through funding and sponsorship.”

Fracchia is an extremely active volunteer in the community and greatly appreciates the support she receives at work. “As a board member, committee member and volunteer, I spend a good deal of time helping Neighborhood Partnerships,” says Fracchia. “And I always know that Columbia is supporting me and even more – encouraging me to give of my time and talent. I never have to question when and how I spend my time trying to make the community a better place.”

# Breaking the Cycle by Breaking Down Barriers

## JESSICA QUINONEZ

For Jessica Quinonez, assistant branch manager for Columbia Bank in Nampa, Idaho, the feeling of being somewhat directionless as a youth remains a strong memory into her adulthood.

“Sometimes as grownups, we don’t realize that so many children need support, guidance and encouragement at home, and that many times it’s simply not there,” says Quinonez. “I know this reality because I felt that absence myself when I was a child. That’s a big reason why I wanted to help change that situation for kids, now that I’m an adult.”

For Quinonez, finding an organization that helps fill that vacancy of guidance became her personal quest and her research led her to The Mentoring Network.

**“I joined The Mentoring Network because I wanted to attach myself to an organization whose mission is to help guide at-risk youth and help set them on the right path. We work to provide school-based, direct-to-youth mentoring that improves outcomes for disengaged kids. We help them develop skills that build personal strengths and self-sufficiency.”**



Much of Quinonez’s enjoyment stems from her work to change the underlying emotions of these kids. “In many ways, low attendance at school, poor test scores and other problems are a direct result of low self-esteem and feelings of low self-worth,” continues Quinonez. “As a mentor, I can help break this cycle and help build up a child’s confidence.”

In one case, the results from her work took years to witness, but the payoff has been nothing short of amazing. “I’ve worked with my first mentee since she was in 7th grade,” she says. “Today, she has finished high school and is well on her way toward a wonderful path of confidence and purpose.”

At every step of this journey, Columbia Bank has provided support. “Working with my mentee, Columbia Bank always gave me the opportunity to visit with her during work hours while she was at school,” says Quinonez. “Without that understanding and encouragement, I don’t know if our mentor/mentee relationship would have turned out so well.”

With support from her employer, and with an unwavering desire to give youth a direction and a path, Jessica Quinonez is removing barriers and building hope.

# A Passionate Advocate for Small Business

**KAREN MCIVER**

One might think that a banker would want to take a break from working with small businesses during their down time, but for Karen McIver, senior vice president and senior credit administrator for Columbia Bank in Tacoma, Washington, helping entrepreneurs is a passion that rarely relaxes.

McIver serves on the board of Evergreen Business Capital, a unique and impactful organization assisting the entire Northwest. “Evergreen Business Capital is the Northwest’s leading Certified Development Company (CDC) and SBA loan program expert,” says McIver. “This amazing organization partners with lenders in Washington, Oregon, and other Northwest locations to provide loans for small business, but even more, they create economic development solutions which continually build up the sector’s stability, growth and employment.”

McIver became involved with Evergreen Business Capital because her knowledge of credit was a perfect match for the organization.

**“Through their support, businesses grow, jobs are created, and communities are strengthened. In other words, the work I do for Evergreen in my volunteer capacity is a logical and impactful expansion of the work Columbia Bank does throughout its service area.”**



As a board member, McIver can use her substantial skills and acumen to help develop and execute Evergreen’s strategy. She also serves on the finance committee and helps ensure the organization maintains a solid financial base which allows it to fulfill its mission.

If that wasn’t enough, McIver is also a key contributor and supporter of United Way of Thurston County – even though she lives in Pierce County. To her way of thinking, she saw a greater need in the adjoining county and stepped in to help. “The United Way is an amazing organization and it’s an honor to support the Thurston County chapter. I engage in the payroll deduction program and it feels great to know my dollars are going directly to support a community I’ve personally chosen to help.”

Columbia Bank is well-known as a local bank that works to make communities better places to live and work and Karen McIver personifies that spirit in every way.

# OUR ACTIONS



# Bringing Volunteerism to the Branch

MATTHEW KLIFMAN

As vice president and branch manager for Columbia Bank in the Lacey, Washington location, Matthew Klifman was always successful at making sure the branch ran smoothly and efficiently. Yet, as a volunteer for the organization Homeless Backpacks, which provides supplemental food to area youth without stable housing, he was always struggling to help this shoestring organization stay afloat. Then, one day, he had the bold idea to merge his occupation with his community vocation to the betterment of both.

“When I told my managers about the struggles of the organization and its inadequate and small space [Homeless Backpacks had] to store food, they suggested I pass the information on up to senior management. Being that it’s Columbia Bank, I knew my words would be listened to and acted upon.”

Sure enough, Klifman and others at the bank put together an unusual but highly effective solution to the nonprofit’s problem – they invited Homeless Backpacks to take up space in the Lacey Branch. “We had capacity at the building, and we worked out great terms to provide them with four times the space and a lease rate that was less than what they currently paid,” says Klifman.



Now, in addition to bank customers driving up to the branch, trucks with pallets of donations arrive to offload much needed food for at-risk youth throughout Thurston County. What used to be a donation operation that filled up closet space, now fills up warehouse space. This has been especially important in 2020 where the global pandemic has more than doubled the organization’s need for donated food items.

“Because of Columbia Bank’s support, we believe we will be able to operate well into the future,” says Klifman.

# Trees to Preserve and Remember

MERCEDES WOODFORD

For many, the word sustainability has become synonymous with preserving the environment. For Mercedes Woodford, client service specialist for Columbia Bank in Eugene, Oregon, sustainability also means preserving the love and memory of a cherished family member.

A few years ago, a tragic accident took the life of her beloved uncle. Mercedes searched for a way to honor him and his lifelong love of nature. “In my grief, I started searching for answers – and that search led me to Friends of Trees.”

Friends of Trees is a nonprofit organization serving the Eugene, Salem and Portland metro areas and is committed to planting native trees and shrubs to both improve and preserve the urban canopy and to help reduce carbon pollution in the environment. Since 1989, Friends of Trees has planted nearly 800,000 trees throughout Oregon and Southwest Washington.

**“I soon discovered the organization and really embraced its mission. In just a little while, I was able to join a tree planting work party. I was healing nature and healing my heart.”**



Enthusiastic about Friends of Trees and their efforts, Woodford went to her team at Columbia Bank to see if they wanted to volunteer as a group. In short order, not only did she have a cadre of her peers signed up, but several supervisors as well.

Says Woodford, “Columbia Bank believes in making our communities better places to live and work and my team instantly saw how planting trees is a perfect way to carry that out. The bank has several environmental sustainability initiatives and I am excited that we are doing so much to preserve and protect the environment.”

# Paving the Way for Other People of Color

MICHAEL CRUZ

It's a cliché, but an apt one: Michael Cruz, vice president and branch manager for Columbia Bank in Lakewood, Washington, walks the walk when it comes to empowering multicultural young leaders.

**“For me, especially as a person of color, I have to look for ways to help other people of color succeed and become part of the American Dream.”**

Toward that goal, Cruz walks the walk by becoming a deeply committed volunteer and leader for a nonprofit called Degrees of Change which works to help people of color prepare for and attend college.

“A college degree is really a passport to a better life and becoming an even more productive member of the community, he says. “Degrees of Change provides amazing support to underserved youth – especially minorities – who might otherwise miss out on that chance.”

More than a year ago, Cruz began volunteering for Degrees of Change and soon his involvement began to skyrocket. Within a few months, he was asked to join the board of directors and soon became treasurer.

Within the organization, Cruz has now provided much of



his support and effort toward a signature program called Act Six. Act Six is a leadership development and college scholarship program that brings together diverse, multicultural cadres of emerging urban leaders who want to use their college education to make a difference on campus and in their communities at home.

“So many of these young people come from really challenging backgrounds,” says Cruz. “By immersing them in Act Six they not only help themselves, but they become catalysts to help the communities where they come from.”

As Cruz has ascended in his role with Degrees of Change, he credits Columbia Bank with supporting his journey every step of the way. “Columbia Bank is truly a community first bank,” he says. “From my team, to my supervisors to everyone, this bank doesn’t just afford me the time toward Degrees, they actively encourage me to do more and more for them. They know that the work the organization does is going to make the community a better place for everyone.”

In short, when it comes to empowering employees to give back in their communities in the ways that matter most to them, Columbia Bank walks to the walk.

# A Mother Helping Other's Children

VANESSA CASTANEDA

Of Vanessa Castaneda, client support specialist for Columbia Bank, it can be said that one should never underestimate the power of a mother and a minivan.

Through her kindness and determination, Castaneda launched a program throughout the Eugene, Oregon area of collecting clothing and items at Columbia Bank branches to support Looking Glass, a homeless and at-risk teen advocacy organization.

**“Working with my managers and leaders at the bank, I was able to place bins at many branches in our community to collect clothing for teenagers who are either homeless or on the very edge of falling into hopelessness. It was amazing, because after just a little bit of time, we had collected so many items that I filled my enormous minivan – twice – and provided these items to Looking Glass.”**

Castaneda's story of supporting Looking Glass began when she read Columbia Bank CEO, Clint Stein's message to employees about the importance of supporting the LGBTQ community. “After reading that letter, I thought to myself, what can I do to help support this group?” she says. “In doing research I soon learned that of the 8,000 teenagers that Looking Glass supports, 40% identify as LGBTQ. I soon had my answer.”



When speaking of Looking Glass and their work to help at-risk teens, especially those in the LGBTQ community, Castaneda often chokes up. “Being a teenager is tough enough under the best of circumstances,” she says. “It can feel overwhelming when you think about all the challenges these kids have to deal with. So, whether it's driving around in my van dropping off donated clothes, or other activities, I am going to do all I can to help these kids have a little better life.”

She also gets emotional talking about Columbia Bank's support of volunteerism. “Columbia Bank is an amazing company to work with! When I first proposed the idea of collecting items for Looking Glass, every single person I spoke to at the bank not only gave me approval, but actively worked with me to make it even more impactful!”

Never underestimate the power of a mom with a minivan and a bank with a big heart.



# Awards

## 2020 COLUMBIA BANK

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- Portland Business Journal Corporate Philanthropy Survey 2020 (#21 at Enterprise Level)
- Puget Sound Business Journal Corporate Citizenship Top Corporate Philanthropist (#19 at the Large Level)
- United Way of Lane County Corporate Volunteerism Award



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