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### Friends of Youth Breakfast Supports Counseling for Youth

Issaquah, WA—Friends of Youth celebrated its first annual Issaquah Youth and Family Services Fundraising Breakfast December 3, where more than 90 attendees gathered at the Pickering Barn to support increased counseling services for youth in the Issaquah School District community. The event was dedicated to youth advocate Vicki Hoffman, who helped plan the event. Hoffman unexpectedly died from a brain aneurysm October 10<sup>th</sup>.

“Vicki’s heart was with all kids, but she had a special place for the ones who struggled,” said Barbara de Michele, who worked alongside Hoffman to plan the event. “She supported kids who struggled with disabilities, and kids struggling with drug and alcohol addictions, kids struggling with poverty, and kids with families in crisis and kids who simply struggled because they didn’t fit the mold, the outliers with quirky personalities, and the artists among us.” Donations in Vicki’s memory have been pouring into Friends of Youth since her untimely death.

Issaquah School District Superintendent Ron Thiele welcomed attendees, noting the district’s long partnership with the agency. Keynoter Michelle Proux discussed raising resilient children and was followed by student representative Robin Lustig and a youth participant. Lustig, a student at Issaquah High School, spoke of the importance of mental health counseling in schools.

“Over the past few years at Issaquah High, there has been one thing than that has stuck out to me: as helpful and lucky we are to have counselors on campus, they are strictly academic,” Lustig said. “There is no one at the school for a student to talk to if a mistake is made over the weekend or if they need someone to open up to about family problems. If granted the mental health counseling resources, I predict we will see a large decrease in the students that say they have experienced things such as depression and suicidal thoughts.”

The need for Friends of Youth’s counseling services is increasing, as waiting lists are growing for students who need these services. Counselors provide help to young people who experience depression, anxiety, adjustment difficulties and substance abuse – primarily alcohol and marijuana. The money raised at the December 3 breakfast will help Friends of Youth increase its support of youth and families in the Issaquah School District community.

**Friends of Youth** delivers a comprehensive range of therapeutic services for youth, young adults and families. With over 60 years of experience, national accreditation and 20 program sites, the agency provides safe places to live and emotional support for youth and families in challenging circumstances. For more information, visit [www.friendsofyouth.org](http://www.friendsofyouth.org).

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Issaquah School District Superintendent Ron Thiele speaks about the school district's partnership and history with Friends of Youth at the Issaquah Youth and Family Services breakfast Dec. 3.



Friends of Youth student representative Robin Lustig discusses how mental health counseling in school can be incredibly beneficial. Having somebody to talk to about non-academic issues is crucial, she said.

