



**CHARITABLE
CONTRIBUTIONS**

8802 27th Ave NE
Tulalip, WA 98271

TulalipCares.org

Funds Distribution Report

Recipient Organization:

Steps

Address:

950 SE Regatta Dr, #101
Oak Harbor, WA 98277

Mailing Address:

PO Box 633
Oak Harbor, WA 98277

Contact:

(360) 679-1039
<https://takingstepstogether.org>

Organization's General Goals:

We provide in-home early support services for infants and toddlers, birth to three years of age, with disabilities or developmental delays on Whidbey Island, Anacortes, and the San Juan Islands.

Date of Award:

2023 Q2

Level:

\$500 to \$2,500

For more information, please read the attached report from Steps.

Disclaimer: This report may be a summary of content provided by the recipient, not always complete quoted material.



March 31, 2025

Marilyn Sheldon
Tulalip Tribes Charitable Contributions
8802 27th Ave NE
Tulalip, WA 98271

RE: Grant Report Q2 2023 14.2 & Q2 2024 14.2

Dear Marilyn,

Thank you for your generous support through the Tulalip Tribes' [REDACTED] grant in 2023 and the [REDACTED] grant in 2024. These funds have been instrumental in advancing the work of Steps early support for infants and toddlers with developmental delays.

Steps served 492 families in 2023 and 511 families in 2024. These numbers reflect not only children formally enrolled in services but also those referred to Steps for full developmental assessments and family resource coordination. Even when a child does not qualify for ongoing therapy, our team provides these services at no cost. Additionally, 2023-2024 saw significant growth and key accomplishments for Steps:

- **Steps Applied Behavioral Analysis (ABA) Program** fully launched on Whidbey Island with 3 providers now supporting 13 young children with intensive ABA therapy. This expansion allows us to offer comprehensive support for children ages birth to entering kindergarten with an Autism diagnosis.
- **Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Therapy:** 2024 marked the completion of our first full year of providing these services across all our service areas, including support for children up to age five on Whidbey Island. Our Mental Health Specialists offer direct support for children experiencing Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES), such as medical procedures, hospital stays, witnessing trauma, or removal from the home.
- **Steps' CHERISH Program** continued to grow in 2023 and 2024. Our CHERISH Team supports children in foster care or out-of-home placements, focusing on their social-emotional well-being and helping families navigate the complexities of caregiving. We now have 15 providers and staff trained in CHERISH support.

We are thankful for your partnership and dedication to our work. If you need additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me at (206) 719-3599 or by email at Heather.T@takingstepstogether.org.

Sincerely,

Heather Tenore
Development Director



Healing Henry Together

When my son Henry was just nine months old, he had to undergo major kidney surgery. Before the surgery, he was thriving—hitting all his milestones and on the verge of walking. But after the procedure, everything changed. He became a completely different child. Henry developed severe separation anxiety and signs of trauma. He would hyperventilate just going to the store or on the swing at the park. Follow-up doctor visits were the worst, he would hold on to my husband and I so tight that we couldn't put him down. His appetite disappeared, and he often threw up his food.

At Henry's one-year check-up, I raised concerns with his pediatrician about his eating and was told to just give him time. After pushing for further evaluation, we were referred to Steps and began working with Andrea, an Occupational Therapist. Andrea quickly realized that

Henry's behavior was PTSD and a reaction to the trauma of his surgery. She introduced us to Lauren, Steps' Infant Mental Health provider, and that's when things started to turn around.

Lauren was incredible. She helped us understand Henry's triggers - things we hadn't even realized, like people wearing face masks, the lighting in the doctor's office, or the smell of the cleaners used in the restrooms. They were the same cleaning products used at Children's Hospital. She gave us tools to help Henry cope. We began to see progress, bit by bit. We started doing trial runs at the doctor's office, using a calm voice and other techniques Lauren had taught us. Slowly, Henry became more comfortable, and his meltdowns lessened. Before, he couldn't even be in a public restroom without panicking. Now, we can change his diaper there without any issues.

Andrea also worked with Henry on rebuilding his confidence. Before therapy, Henry wouldn't go near the other kids or the jungle gym at the park. Recently we went to the park with Andrea and Henry ran, climbed, and played with other kids. Watching him overcome that fear was incredible.

Feeding was another huge challenge. After the surgery, Henry wouldn't chew or swallow properly because of the trauma associated with the NG tube. Andrea helped us ease him back into eating by giving him control, letting him explore food without pressure. Now, Henry eats everything. He even loves raw broccoli, which still amazes me!

Megan, one of Steps' Speech Language Pathologist, also played a big role in Henry's progress. When we first met her, Henry only said a few basic words like "Mama" and "Dada." But thanks to Megan's patience and play-based techniques, his vocabulary has grown tremendously. He's now using over 15 words, and I know he's getting closer to fully talking every day.

There aren't enough words to say how grateful my husband and I are for Steps. Henry is everything to us, and after his surgery, his PTSD was heartbreaking. Now, he's laughing, playing, and enjoying life again. I truly believe that if programs like this had existed when we were kids, the world would be a different place. Steps has given us back our happy, thriving son, and for that, we will always be thankful.

- Jessica

