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With Strategic Hires and Promotion, The Ford Family Foundation Grows Policy and Research Capacities, Early Childhood and Youth Development Expertise

Roseburg, Ore.: As The Ford Family Foundation launches its [10-year strategic plan](#) it has even more talent to lean on. With three new hires and a promotion, the Foundation has expanded the capacities of two of its departments: Children, Youth and Families and Learning and Knowledge Management.

"The Foundation is at a pivotal moment," reflects Anne Kubisch, Foundation president and CEO. "We are growing in critical directions—in research and policy advocacy, in our youth supports—and we can think more expansively about the work ahead and how we champion rural people, places and issues."

Joining the Children, Youth and Families team, led by Keavy Cook, are two seasoned professionals who will support efforts to increase the number of children in rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, Calif. who are thriving, supported and prepared to transition successfully to adulthood. Dana Bleakney-Huebsch and Todd Bloomquist have deep expertise in early childhood, youth development and education and are widely respected in their fields.

Todd Bloomquist will serve as Senior Program Officer – Youth Development and Education, leading the Foundation's work specifically aimed at improving outcomes for children and youth ages 4-18, while also contributing to the Foundation's broader, cross-cutting efforts to strengthen supports for children, youth and families in rural areas. Todd previously served in many director roles for the Grants Pass School District and as adjunct faculty for Southern Oregon University. For three decades, he has been active in the success of students and schools in the Rogue Valley and is a certified trainer on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Neuroscience in Education. Todd holds a doctoral degree in educational leadership and brings a wealth of both on-the-ground experience and scholarly expertise to the Foundation.

Dana Bleakney-Huebsch will serve in the role of Program Officer – Early Childhood Education, managing the Foundation's work to promote early childhood education programs (ECE) and supporting children as they transition from pre-kindergarten settings to K-12 schools. Dana holds a master's degree in child development and most recently worked as the Infant and Toddler Program Specialist for the Early Learning Division of the Oregon Department of Education. Over the past year, she has also worked closely with the Foundation to co-design a child care facility improvement project for six counties in Oregon and Northern California and lend guidance to partners working to increase the availability of high-quality licensed care in rural communities.

A first-of-its-kind role of Learning Officer has been created in the Foundation’s Learning and Knowledge Management team, led by Kasi Allen. A research and evaluation counterpart to Program Officers, Learning Officers will guide Foundation-wide learning, design communications strategies and co-develop rural research and policy agendas in alignment with the strategic plan. Mandy Elder was promoted to Learning Officer – Research and Communications, and Sarah Pytalski was hired as Learning Officer – Policy and Communications.

Sarah Pytalski will facilitate Foundation-wide learning, policy advocacy and strategic communications. She brings a background in policy research and communications to the Foundation, having previously served as a policy research and evaluation manager at the National Congress of American Indians, a policy program manager at Rural Dynamics, Inc. and most recently as a senior strategist at Burness, a communications firm serving nonprofits and philanthropy. In these roles, she conducted research and translated data for community use, authored policy briefs, engaged in rural and tribal policy advocacy and organized focus groups and forums. She holds a master’s of public policy with a rural policy concentration.

Mandy Elder supports strategic rural research and communications across the Foundation. She joined the Foundation as a Hatfield Research Fellow in 2017 and has served as its Communications Specialist since 2019. In her new role, Mandy will connect rural data and research with storytelling, elevating the voices of the rural people and communities the Foundation serves. She earned dual master’s degrees in public administration and sociocultural anthropology and brings to the Foundation a background in rural evaluation, including extensive research in Southern Mexico.

Alongside [other recent hires](#), the Foundation is well-equipped to serve the communities of rural Oregon and Siskiyou County, Calif. in the years ahead.

About The Ford Family Foundation

The Ford Family Foundation was established in 1957 by Kenneth W. and Hallie E. Ford. Its mission is “successful citizens and vital rural communities” in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California. The Foundation is located in Roseburg, Oregon, with a Scholarship office in Eugene. www.tfff.org

General media inquiries

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Photos



Todd Bloomquist, Senior Program Officer – Youth Development and Education



Dana Bleakney-Huebsch, Program Officer – Early Childhood Education



Sarah Pytalski, Learning Officer – Policy and Communications



Mandy Elder, Learning Officer – Research and Communications