



SPRING 2022 NEWSLETTER



Pilot course launches at OCEAN K-12

By *The Benji Project Instructor, Heather McRae-Woolf*

We are excited to share that in April 2022, The Benji Project launched a new course in partnership with the Port Townsend School District's OCEAN K-12 school.

Entitled "Living and Being Well," or LABWell, the course incorporates Mindful Self-Compassion practices and activities around envisioning the future, supporting youth in designing their own unique paths forward through high school and beyond. Parents of participating students will also be offered courses in mindful and compassionate parenting.

LABWell is part of a pilot program, "Community Partnership for Student Well-Being," funded through a grant from the Reimagine Education Project. The grant is administered by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Through June 2023, the pilot will provide social-emotional and academic support to OCEAN high school students with multiple risk factors, including credit deficiency, mental health issues, and poverty.

Summer Camp registration is open

It may not feel like it yet, but summer is around the corner! We are offering two summer camps this July, and generous scholarships are available:

- July 11-15: "Mindfulness in Motion" for middle school youth.
- July 18-22: "LGBTQ+ Mindfulness", offered in partnership with Olympic Pride, for LGBTQ+ youth in the 12-16 age range.

Both camps will run from 1-5 pm, Monday through Friday, at Fort Townsend. Campers will explore the area's forest and beaches, have fun with art and hands-on activities, play games, and engage in creative self-reflection. The experiences are designed to help participants learn mindfulness and self-compassion skills for navigating life's ups and downs. For more info and registration, visit thebenjiproject.org/camp.

ART WORKSHOP

Join us for a Mother's Day Weekend Art Workshop on Saturday, May 7th, from 1-4 p.m.

"When the Cracks Shimmer: Compassion Through Art" is for youth-adult pairs who want to celebrate connection and compassion for Mother's Day.

Offered with artist Dana Weir to benefit The Benji Project programs, the event is for youth ages 12-18 to attend with any connected adult in their lives. Participants will make a decorated paper bowl influenced by *kintsugi*, the Japanese art of putting broken pottery pieces back together with gold. For registration information, visit

thebenjiproject.org/mothers-day.

MILESTONE REACHED

Thanks to your support, The Benji Project has reached more than 1,000 youth since we began in late 2017! We started this year with a series for 5th-8th graders in Brinnon's 4-H After School Program. The focus was leadership training based in mindfulness and self-compassion. We also completed a mindful self-compassion program with 9th and 10th graders at Chimacum Junior/Senior High. Expansion to south county continues to be a priority as we plan future efforts.

Mental Health Awareness & Action

Year-round, The Benji Project works to improve the mental well-being of Jefferson County youth. May also presents a time to connect with national campaigns that have chosen this month for heightening awareness and action regarding mental health issues for all ages. Mental Health America's "May is Mental Health Month" and MTV's "Mental Health Action Day" (May 19th) are among the campaigns we're supporting.

The national campaigns highlight the importance of prioritizing self-care for general well-being, destigmatizing mental illness, and advocating for a better mental health care system. The campaigns couldn't be more timely. In December 2021, the U.S. Surgeon General issued an advisory to bring immediate attention to alarming increases in the number of youth experiencing mental health challenges and to propose solutions. (We've posted the advisory at thebenjiproject.org/news.)

Supporting youth mental health takes a variety of individual and institutional efforts. For The Benji Project, the work involves a proactive "upstream" approach through teaching mindful self-compassion skills. Our school and community programs help young people develop lifelong skills for managing stress and developing emotional resilience. Check out our Facebook and Instagram pages throughout May for information about the national campaigns along with a series on our instructors.



Making a Difference

Please consider supporting The Benji Project's work with Jefferson County youth by making a donation. With the help of our supporters, we can offer youth programs free of charge or with generous scholarships. Checks can be mailed to P.O. Box 1487, Port Townsend, WA, 98368. Secure online donations can be made at thebenjiproject.org/donate.
Thank you!

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