The urgent need to act

Washington is experiencing a severe increase in natural disasters. Wildfires, mudslides, flooding, heat waves, and powerful and destructive storms are now common. These disasters hit the rural parts of our state the hardest.

Natural disasters place multiple burdens on families that often result in economic and psychological trauma—especially in children. Forced evacuations mean dramatic changes in routine, pauses in learning, and changes in social experiences that can cause lifelong insecurity. Without professional care, these disruptions may change the course of a child's life.

Innovative community solutions

In Twisp, the Confluence Gallery created a summer arts camp for kids that opened their imagination to the natural world. An estimated 175 students per week were served during the four-week camp. The cost to families was $1 per day per child. It sold out within days. The camp was run by Michele Koger, MA, LMT, ATR, who focuses on individual and family trauma in her private practice as a therapist.

“Combining science and art creates safety, which is important for the therapeutic process.” —Michele Koger

A solution for all of Washington State

- **Create and fund a program to foster resilience in youth.** ArtsWA (Washington State Arts Commission) will manage a program to serve children and youth who suffer from trauma resulting from natural and other disasters and situations. The program will work at the community level to foster resilience in children, adolescents, and families.

- **Develop a training program.** ArtsWA will train teaching artists, arts therapists, cultural organizations, after school programs, and others to support young people coping with stress due to wildfires, mudslides, floods, and other traumas.

- **Give grants that build capacity.** These capacity-building grants will help communities implement and integrate these resilience-building programs, especially in rural parts of our state, working towards a trauma-informed, healthy, and resilient population.

Operating Budget Request

2023-2025 Biennium $3,000,000

This will fund (1) FTE program director, (1) FTE grant director, and (1) FTE administrative and outreach specialist. It will also fund an annual grant program managed and directed by ArtsWA to ensure equitable and effective reach statewide.

Contact: Karen Hanan, Executive Director, ArtsWA | 360-252-9976 or karen.hanan@arts.wa.gov

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In the last 10 years in Washington State:

- **3 million** acres burned by wildfires
- **17** natural disasters
- **51** add'l unhealthy air days

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Photo: Students discover the joy of nature and recover from wildfire trauma at Twisp’s Art in the Wild summer camp.

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