



M.J. Murdock
CHARITABLE TRUST

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Architecture Foundation of Oregon Launches Education Outreach and Impact Initiative

PORTLAND, OR– The [Architecture Foundation of Oregon](#) (AFO) has received a grant from the M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust of Vancouver, Washington for an education outreach and impact initiative. With Murdock Trust’s support, AFO will hire an Education Outreach Assistant to expand programming for low-income urban and rural schools in Oregon. AFO’s goals for this project also include establishing AFO as a hub for community/school-based design programs and eliminating financial and academic barriers to higher education.

AFO’s Architects in Schools (AiS) program provides design-based education to 3rd to 5th grade classrooms in Oregon. Professionals such as architects, engineers, contractors and more, partner with classroom teachers to deliver design lessons and activities that align with existing classroom curricula and required standards in almost every classroom subject. Since its inception, AiS has served over 50,000 third through fifth grade students. On average, AIS serves approximately 5,000 Oregon students per year

AiS has the potential to make a strong impact on students. When children are exposed to someone in the profession, they start to think about themselves in the role of a designer. AFO Architects in Schools Director, Kim Knowles believes early exposure is critical: “Getting kids thinking about design at a young age lets them know that these doors are open to them.” She emphasizes that “the earlier they start, the easier it is for them to find the tools and opportunities they need to continue to learn and grow as design thinkers and community members.”



Architects in Schools Classroom (Vernon School, Portland OR)

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Due to limited staff time and funding, it is often harder for low-income schools to engage in partnerships like AiS. The Education Coordinator will be able to address low income and Title 1 school need more directly. They will also update the curriculum to better reflect the needs and experiences of a racially and culturally diverse Oregon. By 2024, AFO hopes to reach 40 new classrooms (approximately 2,000 more students per academic year).

Architects in Schools is “just one piece of the puzzle” for AFO’s expansion goals, according to AFO Executive Director Claire Blaylock, “AFO is founded on the belief that Oregon is stronger when more voices contribute to the creation of our communities” This is why AFO will work with partners like National Organization of Minority Architects and the University of Oregon to provide access to education in the AEC field. AFO plans to support students with access to professional development and design-related opportunities in middle school, high school, and beyond.

With the support of corporate members, AFO will establish a series of scholarships for Oregon community college students in Oregon who are pursuing degrees/certifications in architecture and allied fields. AFO will award the Senator Mark O. Hatfield Architectural Award and partner with Carleton Hart Architecture to award the William Hart Scholarship this spring. The goal of AFO’s initiative is to remove systemic barriers to participation in the AEC professions for people from traditionally underrepresented backgrounds. With only 4 registered Black architects in Oregon, the lack of diversity in the AEC industry is one of the major barriers to inspire young Black, Brown, and/or Indigenous people of color students to continue on in the AEC community. Through strong community partnerships, AFO aims to ensure that no students fall through the cracks and work to make sure young students and professionals are supported throughout the education continuum.

About AFO

The Architecture Foundation of Oregon is a nonprofit organization that supports Oregon’s quality of life and creates awareness of our designed environment through education, engagement and inspiration. Founded in 1981, AFO currently runs numerous programs across Oregon including Hip Hop Architecture Camp and Architects in Schools (AiS). For more information visit af-oregon.org.

About M.J. Murdock Trust

M.J. Murdock Charitable Trust, created by the will of the late Melvin J. (Jack) Murdock, provides grants to nonprofit organizations in five states of the Pacific Northwest—Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington—that seek to strengthen the region’s educational, social, spiritual, and cultural base in creative and sustainable ways. For more information, visit <http://www.murdocktrust.org>.

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