



**The  
Kathryn Weit  
Foundation**

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### **The Kathryn Weit Foundation Announces its First Annual Fellowship Recipient**

*The 2022 fellow will focus on creating inclusive housing policy and residential services for Oregonians with Intellectual/Developmental Disability.*

**Portland, Ore. – August 30, 2022** — The Kathryn Weit Foundation, a nonprofit organization created to empower the Intellectual/Developmental Disability (I/DD) community through advocacy and policy, is proud to announce the recipient of its first annual Fellowship, a paid, 12-month opportunity that focuses on networking, mentorship and legislative advocacy for the I/DD community within the state of Oregon — Heidi Robinson, of Beaverton, Ore.

Similar to the Foundation's namesake, Robinson started her career as a teacher. She taught 5th grade in Mesa, Ariz., where she discovered how to engage all learners in an inclusive classroom. But over the last 12+ years, since giving birth to her daughter, Izzy, who experiences Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities, Robinson has shared her expertise behind the scenes, as both a mom and a fierce advocate for the I/DD community. She's witnessed firsthand the inequities people experiencing disability face — in education, healthcare, housing, recreational activities and more — and she's fought back, with a clear passion for social justice and disability services.

"In 2017, I began learning how I could support and advocate for disability rights on a larger scale and educated myself on state and nation-wide disability policy. While I have not been working in the traditional or formal sense for the last 14 years, I've been using and developing my skills and knowledge in ways I never imagined," says Robinson.

Robinson led the SpEd Parent Group at her local elementary school in Hillsboro, Ore., working to facilitate a culture of inclusion, providing families access to important resources, and advocating for professional development on inclusive practices. She volunteers with the Oregon DD Coalition, advocating for legislation that impacts the I/DD community at both a local and national level. She's also served on FACT's Parent Action Committee and received their Family Leader Award in 2017.

As the first Kathryn Weit Foundation Fellow, Robinson's focus this year (starting in September) will be researching and working with the I/DD community to create inclusive housing policy and residential services for Oregonians with I/DD. This work is in direct connection to Kathryn's vision for Oregon and the Foundation's beliefs:

- Representation and inclusion are intertwined.
- Communities should be as diverse as the personalities within them. Voices of families and self advocates are essential.
- Self determination matters.
- Every child & adult has a right to flourish within community.
- Everyone should have the tools to succeed.
- There is great power in talking with someone about who they are & who they hope to be.

"I hope to gain new skills in policy and system change advocacy, to partner and collaborate with community networks and state partners," says Robinson. "Upon completion of the Fellowship, I plan to continue working in the field of disability rights."

Each year, a theme for the Fellowship will be selected based on community need— and a customized project will be developed —based on application.

#### **About the Kathryn Weit Foundation**

Kathryn Weit was a mother, an advocate, a mentor, and a matriarch of a movement. Starting her career as a reading teacher, Kathryn's life flipped upside down when her son Colin was diagnosed with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities in 1981. After attempting to navigate a broken system to access essential services for her son, Kathryn changed careers. She believed that what was unacceptable for her son was unacceptable for any family. Kathryn spent her life working to encourage people to tell their stories. She knew this was a movement of many and that, although powerful, her story was just one. She fought tirelessly for equality, justice, and inclusion for all Oregonians with I/DD. Ensuring the voices of those with I/DD and their families were always at the table. Kathryn's dedication changed Oregon forever.

Our mission at the Kathryn Weit Foundation is to continue her work and empower the Intellectual/Developmental Disability Community through advocacy and policy. It is a publicly funded 501(c)(3) non-profit, whose volunteer board manages the functions of the Foundation and oversees the success of its yearly Fellowship program. *For more information, visit [www.kathrynweitfoundation.com](http://www.kathrynweitfoundation.com).*

