

Only in 2020: Our Community Comes Together

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How many times have you said, “Only in 2020” this year any time a new, unimaginable story pops up? Murder hornets. Pandemic. Wildfires. Only in 2020! This has been a trying, difficult year for our region. Still, despite everything that 2020 has thrown at us, we’ve been inspired by the many ways our partners and colleagues have gone above and beyond to lift up those around them.

As we close out 2020, **we’re taking some time to remember these moments of kindness and community.**

Local Nonprofits Step Up

When Gov. Kate Brown asked Oregonians to stay home to save lives this spring, families across the state scrambled to adjust to virtual school. Many didn’t have enough laptops to do this. Fortunately, organizations like Free Geek were ready to jump into action. While it might

feel like an “only in 2020” moment, Free Geek was ready to meet the demand, which spiked by nearly 4,000% earlier this year.

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We sent another set of electronic donations to Free Geek this summer, playing a small part in their work to connect more families to technology and computers at a time when they're needed the most.

Supporting Local Businesses

This year put a bold, bright spotlight on the need to support local businesses. We're fortunate to have a small business team at the Port that's been doing this for decades.



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They were busy in 2020, helping 11 small businesses graduate from our Mentor Protégé Program while selecting 15 new businesses for the next cohort – all while increasing the number of Port contracts and contract dollars awarded to small, minority and women-owned businesses. To say we are grateful for this team is a vast understatement.

Related: Meet the Mentor Protégé graduates that helped build Concourse E at PDX

We also rethought how we develop industrial land owned by the Port – **launching a new quality jobs framework** with an emerging development project in Gresham, which sets wage, benefits, career growth, and other criteria for businesses coming into our business parks.

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We're especially grateful to our partners – **Specht Development Inc.** and **Colas Development Group** – leading this project in Gresham. Without them, we couldn't have jumpstarted this process in a year like 2020.

Finding Connection in Heartbreak

The year brought so much heartache, and Port staff worked to turn these hard moments into meaningful connections to help each other heal.

After George Floyd's murder, our police department partnered with our Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) team to kick off a weekly dialogue about racial justice that's continued through the end of the year. We started with a focus on connection and healing, but we're turning toward solutions in 2021. These conversations – usually featuring more than 100 Port employees – have served to bring Port staff together at a time when we need connection more than ever.

Related: Why mental health, wellness is an organizational priority in 2020

Nothing signifies this more than the below video, created by our very own Steve Cowden, a graphic designer at the Port. He **wrote the song with his family after the sudden loss of Steve's nephew**, which then inspired this short film that reminds all of us that we're better together ... even if that connection is virtual right now. Warning: you're bound to watch this video over and over and over.



Watch Video At: <https://youtu.be/2brnXjdVyhk>

We think Steve's video is the perfect way to close out 2020. Enjoy some chocolate cake and ice cream as you ring in the New Year.

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