



Callay Boire Shedd, member of The Benji Project Board of Directors and Rotary Fund-a-Cause presenter, with her parents Janine Boire and Ben Shedd

By Carla Caldwell

The Rotary Club of Port Townsend raised \$22,000 for the Benji Project at its annual auction on March 30 at Fort Worden Commons. Founded in 2016 by Cynthia Osterman in memory of her son Benji Kenworthy who died by suicide in 2015, the Benji Project teaches stress management and emotional resilience skills to 11-19 year olds using an evidence-based curriculum of mindfulness and self-compassion called *Making Friends with Yourself*.

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"We are thrilled that this year's Fund-a-Cause will provide scholarships for young people to participate in the program and for teacher training," said Carol Wise, auction chair. "Giving teens tools to build resilience against so many pressures they face, including the social media culture, should be a priority for our community."

Callay Boire Shedd, a Port Townsend high school senior who was a close friend of Benji, currently serves on the organization's board of directors. She spoke to the auction attendees about her personal adolescent struggles, dealing with Benji's death, and finding healing through mindfulness and self-compassion. She said that she now knows that, "I can think I am awesome, really cool, and beautiful." Then she asked people to raise their paddles for the Benji Project.

In addition to the Fund-a-Cause, the auction raised \$40,000 for Rotary service projects and community grants in 2019-20.

For additional information about the Benji Project, visit thebenjiproject.org. To learn more about the local and international causes supported by the Port Townsend Rotary Club, visit www.porttownsendrotary.org.