



United Way of Lane County

Siuslaw Upriver Community Conversation about Health and Well-Being – Community Feedback Summary

May 11th, 2022 5-7pm - Mapleton Grange, 10880 E. Mapleton Rd. Mapleton, OR

Summary

Around 30 Siuslaw Upriver Area residents and stakeholders gathered at the Mapleton Grange for a community conversation about health and well-being in their community. In partnership with Siuslaw Vision, this community conversation was part of the ongoing efforts of Live Healthy Lane's Rural Outreach Project's work to better support rural Lane County communities through collaboration and lifting rural voices at health investment and decision-making tables. The goal of this event was to provide an open space for community members to discuss what unmet needs they have in their community and share what it is like for them to access vital resources. They were also asked what change they would like to see in the future and how organizations like United Way and Siuslaw Vision can help support this.

Among the four discussion breakout groups some key themes arose. There is a huge need for childcare options in the area to help address both the isolation and developmental issues children are facing and parent's ability to work. The school district is facing low enrollment numbers and lacks resources, with many students struggling particularly the last few years due to the isolation and switch to remote schooling brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic. Accessing quality healthcare remains a large issue, especially mental health services and dental care. A lack of accessible mental health services is hurting youth in particular, who are experiencing higher rates of isolation due to the COVID-19 pandemic. There is also a lack of living wage jobs in the area, and many families are feeling the impact of generational poverty which impacts every other area of their health and well-being. Finally, food insecurity remains a prevalent issue and many rely on the local Food Share for access to affordable, healthy food. Many of the needs discussed intersect with one another and many participants shared ideas for the future of their community that would address multiple issues at once.

Many of the solutions to these issues shared across discussion groups included creating more shared community spaces and resources. To address health, medical, dental, and basic need access issues, multiple breakout discussion groups suggested creating a community resource center in the Middle school building that is currently not being used where community organizations, social services, and medical providers could rotate providing their services to the community. The importance of creating more shared community spaces, programs, and events was also highlighted as a key way to combat the high rate of isolation and mental health issues being experienced in the community, especially among youth, by offering opportunity to connect with neighbors and support one another. Potential ways to do this could be reopening the community pool or starting an after-school program for kids. There was also support for providing more career opportunities and training at the high school, through things like a

mentorship program with local businesses, or farming and trade programs. These programs would help foster connections between youth and the rest of the community, create more living wage jobs, and help create opportunities for students to stay in school and be employed in the area following graduation. To address ongoing food insecurity in the community, there was support for bringing a food co-op or farmer's market to town and providing additional support to the Mapleton Food Share. Increasing internet access was also discussed as an important way to increase access to education, living wage jobs, healthcare, and social connection.

Table of Contents

Childcare

Needs

- Multiple participants shared that there are no childcare or long-term care options in the Mapleton or upriver area. Because of this most people rely on their neighbors or other family members to watch their kids while they are at work. The lack of affordable, high quality care options often results in children being left home alone or taken care of by siblings. Having inadequate care options negatively impacts both children's development and their parent's employment options.
 - "In the summer time, there are parents who go to work and lock their kids in the house with the 10-year-old taking care of the little ones." - community forum participant
- The area did have a grant-funded after-school childcare program at one time, but this program couldn't afford to continue operations after the grant ended. Participants cited that competition for grants has been difficult due to their small population numbers, but the need still exists for children and families in the community no matter their size.
 - "In my childcare, I was so glad that I could hire 5 people when I got a grant, but when that grant ran out, we couldn't keep them. We couldn't get it because we couldn't compete with places that have more kids." - community forum participant

Education

Needs

- Many participants described the challenges the Mapleton School District and its students have been facing due to low enrollment and low resources. Due to low enrollment numbers, the school district has moved all of their students into the high school building and the middle school building is being used for other community uses such as the Watershed Council. They also reported that Mapleton schools only have 4 days of school a week because they cannot afford 5 days. The high school has a high drop-out

rate (36%) and participants described students not knowing how to access ways to further their education or start their career due to a lack of resources available to them through the schools.

- “Most kids graduate but they don’t go anywhere” - Community forum participant
- Participants also discussed how students’ home conditions, such as level of support from family members and access to stable internet impact their education. They highlighted how the COVID-19 pandemic and switch to online learning made education nearly impossible for students without a stable internet connection in their homes. Satellite internet is the only thing available upriver in Swisshome and Deadwood, and it is not enough. A lack of internet access also impacts students’ abilities to take up opportunities to further their education online, such as through Lane Community College.
 - “Lots of the kids will say I want to go to LCC (Lane Community College) in the next two years, but it’s been mostly online. The kids who have substandard homes got lost in the dust when schools went virtual.” - Community forum participant
 - “The school can teach, but 70-80% (of students) cannot do their homework by themselves” - Community forum participant

Proposed Solutions

- One proposed solution for beginning to address the educational disparities students experience was to have a summer program at the schools. This would keep the kids connected with one another and provide additional time for them to learn and connect with community resources that may help further their education and career goals.
 - “We need to have the school be a community center for wellness” - community forum participant
 - “ There needs to be a summer school program or summer opportunity. There used to be a summer school program because kids go home and get locked in all the time.” - community forum participant
- Another solution proposed was getting access to reliable internet for the whole region.
 - “The biggest struggle for us was remote learning. Putting aside the detrimental effect that had on my daughter, so many of our struggles came out of not having internet access that was reliable while having to work and have two kids in virtual learning. Could not work from home because the internet was not strong enough.” - community forum participant

Transportation

Needs



United Way of Lane County

- Participants identified transportation as a huge barrier for families in accessing resources. High gas prices, dangerous road conditions, and long distances to get to the nearest grocery store or medical clinic were cited as the biggest barriers to accessing and using transportation. At the Mapleton Food Share, the director has seen that many upriver folks can afford to get to the pantry but can't afford to get home, and the rising gas prices are exacerbating this issue.
- There is a bus that connects Mapleton to Florence and Eugene but there is only one stop in town with limited hours and can still be expensive and time-consuming to even get to the bus.
 - "Issues with time and transportation prohibit folks from getting the things they need. It is an all-day trip to get groceries." - community forum participant
 - "I walk my dogs and feel like crying – I saw a former student I knew in 6th grade who was a leadership kid, I adored her and took her to leadership conferences. She was working at the gas station. I knew her siblings and asked where they were, they were at home. Dad died last October, they live up river and have to drive if they want to get anywhere and I hoped their car was working. Looking at this girl working at the gas station. I know how much more she can go but there's no transportation for her to get anywhere. I love that we got the bus to Mapleton, but that's not enough!" - community forum participant

Proposed Solutions

- Mapleton Food Share has been providing gas vouchers to their participants to help them afford to get to and from the pantry and access food. More support for programs like this would be greatly beneficial.
- Participants suggested looking for solutions other rural communities have had success with in increasing transportation access, such as investing in mobile van programs that can transport residents to appointments, jobs, and errands.
 - "I know there are solutions, in other communities there are little vans that can take you where you need. It doesn't just come in the day or night. They are tied to the community needs." - community forum participant

Healthcare Access

Needs

- Participants described difficulties accessing medication due to there being no pharmacies or clinics nearby. Many residents rely on the mail to access medications. This requires internet access and works for long term medications, but it is difficult to get one off medication to treat illness such as antibiotics.



United Way of Lane County

- 10 years ago, there was a push for a community clinic to be put in at the school. There were too many regulations for what a clinic needs, such as room size, and the structural changes needed for the building were too expensive to make it happen. Even with a clinic, Mapleton then would need a pharmacy in order to access medication and retain the staffing of a pharmacist. This has been a challenge across the county this year, including in Florence.
- Access to women's healthcare is also an issue. Women's care is available at Peace Harbor in Florence, but they are going through a lot of change. Women don't know who their providers are. Peace Harbor often cancels or reschedules appointments, and it is already so difficult for women to get to town for their appointments, they don't want to risk a cancelation. There are no local OB-GYNs, only in Eugene or Florence. There are traveling nurses, but people don't like that; they want consistency.
 - "People get rescheduled and then they give up; they think 'my baby's fine.'" - community forum participant

Proposed Solutions

- A proposed solution by multiple breakout groups was to establish a community resource and health center that could act as one central location for services to be available at. Community organizations could rotate the availability of their services so they could share the space with each other and offer wrap-around services. This could be a space for a mobile medical and dental clinic to offer services. Potential spaces that the resource center could be located in are the Middle school building that is not currently being used or the Mapleton Food Share once they expand into the new building they are working on buying.
 - "There needs to be a local DHS or a doctor comes out to help. The middle school has a sign on it that says Siuslaw community health center, and for a while, Trillium and PeaceHealth but there is no awareness around it if there is something available. We could use a once-a-week PA (physician's assistant) or community doctor. "- community forum participant
- Another shorter-term idea proposed was hosting a community resource fair or "meet the aspects of our community" event where there could be universal sharing of resources and connections with the community so that everyone is aware of what services are available to them and what supports they have for accessing all forms of medical care and social supports.
 - "The Fire department, SOS, Siuslaw Vision, and other community groups could have informational tables and give people the chance to meet each other and problem solve...but with fun involved too" - community forum participant

Mental Health Services

Needs



United Way of Lane County

- Participants described a huge and growing need for mental health services in their community. Many described a lack of available quality services and long waiting lists for the next available counselor. COVID-19 and the switch to online counseling has further delayed access to services, placing community members experiencing mental health issues at increased danger. There is a huge need to recruit for the mental health field in their area to expand services.
 - “Mental health and addiction services are 100% obsolete, and there is a huge need. Even people who receive disability benefits can’t get quality services.” - community forum participant
 - “Since November, I’ve been looking for a face-to-face counselor, but the closest counselor is Tacoma. One in Eugene but only takes women.” - community forum participant
- Participants also discussed the value and limitation of their mobile crisis response program. The Mobile Crisis Response Program was modeled after the Cahoots program in Eugene and offers support, interventions, and guidance to community members facing mental health crises or unexpected traumatic situations. It is a valuable program but still lacks resources and staffing. One crew member reported working 96 hours a week on the program due to a shortage of help. The program also requires having police available for all calls, and there are no police available in the Upriver communities. Participants also discussed the limitations of the program only being able to respond when folks are already in crisis and the lack of follow-up resources available to their clients after intervention. Clients still have to navigate many barriers to access care beyond MCR’S intervention such as phone bills, transportation, and appointment follow-ups on their own, with very limited services available in the first place.
 - “MCR is modeled after cahoots, but it’s just a band-aid.”
 - “Even though we’re lucky enough to be one of the few rural communities with a crisis response team, what can be done is so limited. We can respond, we can be someone to listen to them, but to take it from that response and de-escalation to actually getting them services and resources is impossible.” - MCR crew member
 - “We get them a safe plan for tonight. Then what do we do tomorrow? They get directed to other services and don’t have advocates or people assisting them with follow-up (that position was eliminated).” - MCR crew member
 - “It’s horrifying, the level people have to get, whether because of a mental health crisis, or they’re suicidal, or they have dementia... the level that people have to get to before someone can intervene on their behalf is horrifying.” - community forum participant
- Participants also described how mental health services are needed especially by youth in the community, many who experience isolation outside of school, which has only been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. They spoke about how COVID-19 has been especially hard on very young kids (preschool and below) who didn’t get to see people



United Way of Lane County

interacting, and how quarantine and a lack of contact with other kids had stunted social development.

- “We live in an incredible place, but young people and seniors are isolated -it’s beautiful and we get to be isolated in a forest. Kids go to school and socialize but when they go home, they are alone.” - community forum participant
- “This age group is falling behind.” - forum participant
- “Kids are isolating themselves in social settings” - forum participant
- There is a tremendous need for support for kids experiencing mental health issues and coming from abusive environments. Kids need a safe space to go, but there are limited resources available for children. There is a school resource center with one counselor responsible for both Mapleton and Siuslaw school districts who is not allowed to see siblings, limiting the counselor’s impact. Many have to commute to Eugene for mental health services they’re referred to, such as Looking Glass.
- Participants also discussed how the large shift to telehealth and remote mental health services continues to be a barrier as many folks do not have adequate internet access for these services.
 - “Telehealth is a joke because people cannot use the computers.” - community forum participant
 - “There’s one huge disconnect, we talked about the lack of electronics, we need to get back to face to face meetings with counselors... If you don’t do electronics, that’s your only option.” - community forum participant

Proposed Solutions

- A primary solution to accessing mental health services is to fund and recruit more mental health professionals in the area. An idea for doing this was to start a high school program that empowers youth to become a youth support specialist or QMHA (qualified mental health associate). Mapleton high school reportedly used to have a program like this before the COVID-19 pandemic and community members would like to see it brought back.
- Another proposed solution to some of the mental health issues in the community was to create more shared community spaces and events where people can connect with and support each other. A suggested way to do this was hosting community events without any agenda except to just serve food, play music, and let people connect. This could be an opportunity for kids to connect with each other, and parents to connect with other parents. It could also be an opportunity to provide resources to people.
 - “We need to share resources with others.” - community forum participant
 - “Even some people who maybe don’t need the resources, they need the community. Out where we are it is so isolating, but it’s so beautiful that you kind of forget people exist. Human interaction is also still important. Service provision provides an opportunity for connection.” - community forum participant



United Way of Lane County

- “There’s so much strength in that – a lot of people don’t know their neighbors anymore. If people were better connected, they could support each other with what they need. Say your neighbor needs a fridge, and you have an extra – that’s something we could support each other with.” - community forum participant
- There was also support for establishing and reactivating existing shared community spaces such as through the Granges, the Mapleton Lion’s Club, Swisshome Church, and the Deadwood Community center.
 - “Bear camp now has a monthly community potluck with music and an opportunity to meet your neighbors. Even if you just stop in for 15 minutes, you can share a lot of resources” - community forum participant
- Community members have been working on reopening the community pool to act as one of these spaces. The community pool was the community center when it was open; “You see people together, enjoying time together. (It could be a) wellness facility where people can go to play – we need people together”. The pool was free for families and folks used to use the space to shower for free under a USDA grant. “It would address prenatal, kids, families, and elderly in accessing recreation, exercise, and community-building.” But the project is expensive. The last numbers the SRAC (Siuslaw Regional Aquatic Center) have heard is that it would take \$6 million to rebuild. They have \$500K granted from the government and another \$500K from the USDA for FEMA support, which is not enough to fund the whole project. It would be beneficial if Lane County Park or another entity could take up part of the cost.
 - “People would sit in the pool and socialize and connect...the water center was open, and allowed people to get to know each other” - community forum participant
 - “The pool was the community center” - community forum participant

Dental Care Access

Needs

- Participants described how access to dental care is a huge problem. There are not enough dental providers in the area, especially at an affordable rate. Without dental insurance, care is extremely expensive and hard to come by. There is one mobile dental program in the area but it requires insurance and has inconsistent availability. There is also a dentist in Florence who comes to the schools and recently began accepting OHP due to a high demand, but there still needs to be more consistent dental options in the community.
 - “You can get dental care at an affordable rate in Eugene or Florence at the White Bird free dental clinic. (we’re) not asking for Mapleton to have a dental clinic, but we need an outreach service.”



United Way of Lane County

- “As a PA (physician’s assistant), I saw abscessed mouths 1-2x a week, largely due to a lack of dental insurance and no dentists nearby” - community forum participant
- “There just aren’t enough (dental providers) and if you don’t have insurance dental care is hugely expensive. If your teeth are sick, your whole body is sick.” - community forum participant

Proposed Solutions

- Participants identified having some form of a dental outreach service or consistent mobile program as a way to address community dental health issues. Specifically, participants would like to see PeaceHealth offering a lower-barrier dental program here or, for Mapleton Food Share to offer dental services. Capitol Dental is working on getting a mobile dental clinic going that accepts OHP to serve rural Lane County that could park outside of Mapleton Food Share once it starts up.

Housing

Needs

- Participants shared how housing is increasingly becoming an issue. They reported a large lack of affordable and accessible housing options, especially for young, working families. There is one multi-family complex in town, but it is full and the rent is expensive for the area at \$800/month.
 - “There isn’t any housing here. No rentals. There is one complex but it’s filled.” - community forum participant

Economic Development

Needs

- Access to stable jobs with a living wage was identified as a huge community issue. Participants shared that there are very few living wage jobs available in the area. People often have to go to Eugene or Florence for jobs, which can be an expensive and time consuming commute. Most jobs are in the service and restaurant industry, but even those are limited. The only places that pay a living wage in the community are the school district and the mill, but there are disparities even within jobs at these sites. For example, teachers at the school district get health insurance, but aides do not and it is too expensive for them to pay for health and dental insurance out of pocket. The Siuslaw upriver has a history of being a logging community and in the past there were 7 mills within 5 miles of Mapleton that provided jobs for the community. Now these mills are closing down and aging out, and no jobs are replacing them. This lack of jobs in combination with having no housing available is making it hard for students to stay in the area after they graduate school.



United Way of Lane County

- “provide living wage jobs and you will address all of the other issues”
- “We already know that the living wage is too low and there aren’t jobs here.”
- “The living wage jobs. Wages suck and the cost of living keeps going up. The air bnb’s take up all the homes. At minimum wage you qualify for services. We lost the middle class. You have the upper class. The middle class is in poverty.”
- “If we took poverty off the table so everyone got a living wage, what would be the problem?”
- “Living wage jobs could solve the problem. The root cause is economic development. The cycle of poverty has made the struggle worse. It’s not just that there’s a job, it’s how to get to the job.”
- “ If we had all the money we need, we would still struggle because of generational poverty.”

Proposed Solutions

- A proposed solution to help increase access to living wage jobs is to improve internet access and cell service in the area so that residents can take advantage of remote work opportunities and be able to stay in the area.
 - “So many jobs opportunities could be open to a community like ours if we had access to reliable internet/remote work.”
- Another proposed solution was to address job issues by starting at the schools by providing students with career exploration opportunities. This could include a mentorship program between high school students and retirees or local businesses to teach kids about possible career avenues or offering a Trade program where students interested in trade professions could intern with local professionals, offering a farming program to students, and hosting an annual career fair at the high school. One participant also offered the idea for the University of Oregon’s extension services to have a location in Mapleton, which would both create jobs and provide education opportunities for high school kids that can’t afford a 4-year college.

Infrastructure

Needs

- Participants across groups expressed a big need for more support around the area’s infrastructure including paving roads, preventing flooding, and getting clean water filtration access. Specifically, river maintenance and preventing flood danger is a huge issue and impacts the safety and health of everyone living off of 36, who are left stranded when it floods. Water access is also a huge issue, and the town of Mapleton has had issues with the water getting turned off multiple times in the past few years.
 - “Flooding is inevitable, but it would be nice to have something to mitigate the risk”



United Way of Lane County

- “You have to be careful because you enjoy living in the rural area, but you still have certain needs that need to be addressed”
- “If it floods, how is anyone living up on 36 going to get anywhere?”
- “There recently was 6 months where we had to boil the water all the time”

Food Security

Needs

- Participants shared that there is no access to healthy food in the area unless you grow your own garden or can afford to go to Florence. Going grocery shopping can take all day if driving to Eugene, and some people can't afford to buy in bulk when they make the trip, so they spend valuable time and money on transportation in order to get food, resources, and services. Some Local farms have shut down making it even harder to access fresh produce, and the only CSA's available are in Florence, which is too far of a drive for many families to afford to do weekly.
 - “You need to go to Florence to buy groceries, but cannot afford gas and to drive and inflation is also a problem. Most kids eat fried stuff at randy's (store)”
- Community members expressed gratitude for the work the Mapleton Food Share and school backpack program does to provide healthy food for families in the area. The Mapleton Food Share (MFS) helps many community members access free, healthy food that is otherwise not available in town. The Food Share also supports 3,800 sack lunches for kids in the school district and a backpack program that provides food for kids to bring home to eat over the weekend. However, they are picking up a larger burden than most food shares should have to because of the volume of folks suffering from food insecurity, and the director said she feels like “I just keep buying and buying” but there is never enough. The food share benefits from community donations, but there is a shortage of staples donated to MFS. They rely on whatever is left over from Food for Lane County, which means they often get a lot of sweets and ice cream, not things like sliced bread and produce. This makes it difficult for the food share to plan distributions and provide consistent access the way they would like to. The Food Share had a garden in the past through a few grants, and the high school had a Farm to Table class where students would volunteer in the garden and they had great involvement. The class was cancelled due to covid, and they no longer have the volunteer support that they had before to keep it up, so they had to sell the greenhouse.
 - “The Mapleton Food Share is an incredible resource.”
 - “I don't know if our food share could be any better. I could call them right now and they would get a food box for whoever I need.”
 - “The backpack program is saving kids. The whole school is on free lunch, and the backpack program makes sure those kids and their families have food to eat over the weekend” –



United Way of Lane County

- “They do a great job at the Food Share here”

Proposed Solutions

- Participants expressed a need for a lower priced grocery store, food co-op, or farmers market in Mapleton. Deadwood has a farmer’s market, but Mapleton would benefit from having their own. Farmer’s markets are a place where people can sell low-cost, local and healthy foods, trade goods and services, and connect with neighbors. There is a market for a co-op and farmer’s market in Mapleton, it just needs some community energy and awareness around it to be coordinated.
- One participant suggested looking at the Agrarian Sharing Network in South Lane, a free seed and fruit tree exchange throughout Willamette valley, as another program example that could be useful for the Mapleton area. A program like this in the Siuslaw area could help support and connect people working in food systems and expand fresh produce access.
- Participants noted the importance of making sure community members are aware of and know how to access these programs. There is a community garden in the Swiss Home area but no one is using it. Participants recommended incentivizing these programs and offer services and classes on how people can use them and improve their own health. Possible incentives include giftcards and home garden kits.
 - “Give people a reason to get up, come together as a community, and engage together in something” - community forum participant
- Participants also discussed bringing back school-based agricultural learning and the farm to table class at the high school that once supported the Mapleton food Share’s community garden.
- There were many ways to support the growth of the Mapleton Food Share provided. The Food Share is currently raising money to buy a larger building, and still has \$63,000 to go. It is also working to get funds for a summer food program for school district’s families, as there is currently no food program in the summer for the kids that rely on school for breakfast and lunch during the school year.