

What Can I Do?

A SERIES TO HELP UTAHNS ENGAGE



NO. 36 | JULY 1, 2024

What Wayne County Leaders and Residents Can Do To Strengthen the Impact of Girls and Women in Their Area

UTAH WOMEN &
LEADERSHIP
Project

Wayne County is full of engaged, passionate individuals who frequently ask the question, "What can I do to strengthen the impact of girls and women in this area?" To provide specific answers to that question, the **Utah Women & Leadership Project** (UWLP), in conjunction with the USU Wayne County Extension, hosted a think tank to collect ideas for individuals, groups, and organizations interested in supporting and empowering girls and women in their area.

This idea sheet is based on a 2024 gathering of leaders and residents in Wayne County, with input from 20 individuals. Girls and women face challenges unique to the area in which they live, and the goal of this gathering was to identify those barriers and determine strategies and initiatives that local leaders and residents can implement to address them. This document includes recommendations in the following areas: business and economics, home and family, government and community, education, and culture.

BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS

In the business sector, Wayne County women struggle with a variety of issues, with limited job opportunities and lack of childcare being at the forefront. Recommendations for businesses and the community include:

- Advance economic development in the county to counter the lack of industry.
- Boost the number of jobs with higher pay.
- Eliminate nepotism.
- Empower women to advocate for themselves regarding equal pay and asking for a raise. Women should know their value and not settle for less.
- Have equal pay for equal work.
- Increase the number of childcare providers. Offer trainings, certification, resources, and space for childcare providers in each town. Consider finding grants, allocating funding, or having it be part of education development. Share that the Utah Department of Workforce Services can assist.
- Offer flexible or remote work with innovation in the rural workspace.
- Normalize job security and maternity and paternity leave.
- Provide workshops and networking events focused on entrepreneurship and small business management tailored to the unique challenges faced by women in Wayne County and rural areas.

- Publicize employment internship opportunities through the Utah Department of Workforce Services.
- Set up a "take your kids to work day" to encourage job exploration. Encourage school field trips to explore jobs and understand employment.
- Spotlight the differences between skilled and unskilled labor regarding adequate pay and seasonal employment. Encourage the exploration of trade programs and other workforce options.
- Teach girls and women about online careers, including remote jobs in the technology industry, so they can remain local and still work in a professional career.

HOME & FAMILY

In Wayne County, parents are recognized as one of the most powerful influences on the lives of their daughters. Recommendations for parents and society include:

- Advocate for daughters to reach for their dreams and understand that fear of success and/or failure affects everyone.
- Give daughters social-emotional education, including how to establish boundaries and personal space.
- Inspire resiliency.
- Instill in daughters that they can speak up, request what they deserve, and not settle for less.
- Promote getting involved in 4-H youth leadership and volunteer opportunities.
- Redefine traditional gender roles in the family so girls and women know they have options.
- Stress that raising a family and getting education are not mutually exclusive – daughters can do both.
- Underscore the long-term value of higher education.

GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY

Participants recognize the challenges facing women in Wayne County, including housing, mental health, and lack of resources and opportunities. Recommendations for the government and community include:

- Address the lack of affordable housing due to low wages, high security deposits, and single incomes.
- Equip healthcare providers and community leaders with tools to identify and address mental health issues, particularly those prevalent among women, such as postpartum depression, anxiety disorders, and trauma-related conditions.
- Inspire girls and young women to recognize their self-worth, stand up for themselves, think creatively, and to not follow the crowd.
- Involve Americorps Foster Grandparents to mentor and support girls and young women.
- Promote better networking within the county to get the word out about resources and opportunities, including partnerships with universities and opportunities for entrepreneurs and STEM.
- Provide more cultural awareness by giving opportunities for girls and young women to attend a Shakespeare play, a Broadway play, the symphony, and the ballet. Make tickets available for them to attend cultural events in Salt Lake City. Broaden their cultural experiences.
- Set up recreational programs and outdoor activities tailored to the interests and needs of women and girls, such as hiking groups, art workshops, or sports leagues, to promote physical health and social connections.

EDUCATION

Leaders in Wayne County emphasized the essential role schools play in developing leadership, confidence, and competence in girls and young women. Ensuring that women complete high school and obtain college certificates and degrees is critically important to continue a woman's development. Recommendations for schools and the community include:

- Establish Reality Town in 7th or 8th grades to explore life circumstances and understand finances and the value of education.
- Have middle and high school classes that are safe spaces for girls to learn resources, statistics, and how to raise their voice in crisis so they don't become a statistic.
- Make math cool and offer more math and science class offerings. Have science and math programs that create young women capable and confident in STEM.
- Offer Occupational Home Economics where students can go to work for a class period and gain work experience along with school credit.
- Partner with residents to harness their talents and experience. Do community surveys to learn about skills and education and who would be willing to teach and volunteer during or after school so students can learn from and get exposure to career professionals. Consider career clubs.
- Provide civics and finance education for both K-12 and adults. Include investing, negotiating salaries, and getting job promotions.

- Put together mentorship initiatives that connect girls with successful women from similar backgrounds, providing guidance and inspiration for academic and career advancement. Expose girls to professional women to broaden their understanding of what they can do and achieve.
- Spotlight the difference girls and women can make in their community. Help them learn leadership skills and become aware of available opportunities.
- Stress the range of options, choices, and benefits of higher education. Inform them about flexible online higher education and opportunities for learning outside of traditional classrooms.
- Underscore the importance of grants and scholarships, including FAFSA, to help pay for postsecondary education.

CULTURE

The think tank attendees acknowledged that the culture (why and how we do what we do) in Wayne County has a significant impact. Leaders are concerned about the limitations and decreased value culture has placed on women and girls. Recommendations include:

- Address gender stereotypes, including the woman being the one who cares for the children and stays home. Redefine traditional roles that limit girls and women in their life choices. Make it acceptable for women to work, even with a family, if they need or choose to.
- Empower girls and women to know they can be good at many things, including being a mom, but to know that is not all they can do.
- Ensure support for girls in the community is the same as for boys. They should be told they are as smart, athletic, and capable as boys and should be equally valued.
- Help girls and women dream bigger, and help them accomplish those dreams.
- Provide role models of successful, accomplished women. Have women leading women.

CONCLUSION

When we listen and respond to concerns regarding the needs of girls and women in Wayne County, we will be better able to change harmful or ineffective policies and programs, continue effective action, support effective leaders, identify and solve local problems, and create responsive initiatives. The UWLP encourages leaders and residents to use this document to affect change.

Thank you to the USU Wayne County Extension and to the many collaborators and partners in Wayne County who supported the community conversation. Report authors: Deborah Lin and Dr. Susan R. Madsen.