

What Can I Do?

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

UTAH WOMEN &
LEADERSHIP
Project

Beaver 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 Utah State University - Beaver Campus and Beaver High School 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 22 leaders and residents in Beaver County. 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: home and family, education, government and community engagement, health and wellbeing, and culture.

HOME & FAMILY

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

- Be a part of your daughters' world and engage with them so you know their challenges and how to best support them.
- Build confidence in daughters from a young age that will endure as they grow older.
- Ensure your daughters know that you have their back no matter what.
- Help daughters learn to stand up for themselves, be strong, and vocalize problems and concerns.
- Mentor and be an example to them and find other good examples that they can look up to of strong, accomplished women.
- Model shared responsibilities in the home between fathers and mothers so children see parents as equal partners.
- Normalize intervening and standing up for others when necessary.
- Promote the value of postsecondary education from a young age.
- Stand by your daughters and encourage, accept, and motivate them.
- Stress the importance of setting long-term goals, and help daughters know that anything is achievable.

EDUCATION

Leaders in Beaver County emphasized the essential role schools play in developing leadership, confidence, and competence in girls and young women. They recognize the essential role graduating from college plays in a woman's life. Recommendations for schools and the community include:

- Develop basic knowledge and skills in female students so they can be independent and self-supporting adults.
- Ensure school curriculum prepares girls for their futures.
- Equip girls and young women to be bold, have confidence, and uplift and encourage each other.
- Establish value in girls for being knowledgeable.
- Expand girls' leadership skills and provide opportunities to be leaders.
- Host career day events with examples of nontraditional careers.
- Identify models and mentors in a variety of fields so girls can see the range of possible careers open to them.
- Instill the value of higher education attainment and how it will give women more options throughout their lives.
- Promote that many professionals – even doctors and nurses – can work part-time as needed. There should be no limits on what they can do in their careers.
- Provide community classes that help adult women continue to develop personally and professionally and have more opportunities.

GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The importance of involving girls and women in civic activities and getting support from government in Beaver County, as well as local cities and towns, emerged as primary themes. Recommendations for government and the community include:

- Advance community support to those in need, including addressing the affordability versus funding gap, to better support struggling families.
- Bring together those who qualify for resources with available opportunities.
- Conduct community outreach to men, women, and families so they understand what resources are available.
- Create a social media campaign for awareness, including important issues such as having better communication, speaking up, having confidence, the importance of leadership, and lifting others without degrading.
- Educate residents about the serious issues facing women and girls by sharing the statistics. Include the media.
- Foster parental awareness of the issues facing girls and how to counteract them.
- Increase women's political representation by helping them know they are needed and valued. Provide support for those who run for political office.
- Normalize women and girls being leaders.
- Promote examples of women in important roles and spotlight them. Girls and women cannot be what they don't see and need models and mentors.
- Recommend women get out of vice-chair mode and know they can be the chair. Provide leadership training.
- Set up a come-as-you-are women's forum once-a-month to strengthen and empower women on a variety of topics.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Concern over the mental health and emotional wellbeing of girls and women in Beaver County emerged as a primary theme. Recommendations for healthcare and society include:

- Acknowledge those struggling with mental health and provide resources and needed support to them.
- Advocate for seeing a therapist and make it acceptable for those who need to. Make mental healthcare accessible.
- Call out the negative impact of social media, on girls and young women in particular, and emphasize how to protect them from the harmful effects.
- Let girls and young women know social media is not reality.
- Reinforce ways to personally support others who may be struggling.
- Show girls and women how to become aware of and consciously change their negative self-talk to be more constructive and mindful.
- Stress the importance of girls and women recognizing and focusing on their self-worth and potential.
- Support mental health overall.

CULTURE

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

- Believe and support girls and women when they tell you about their lived experiences.
- Counter the silence about problems facing women and girls and pretending they don't exist by discussing them openly. We can't solve them until we acknowledge them and bring them into the light.
- Change the "old school" mentality where girls' only goals are to get married and have kids. This is not realistic or desirable for everyone, so young women need to be aware of a range of possibilities and opportunities for their future and how to prepare for those.
- Encourage girls and women to be the best version of themselves, and not something pre-determined by society.
- End the cycle of stereotyped gender roles so both girls and boys know they have unlimited options and can choose what they want to do personally and professionally.
- Get rid of harmful labels and stereotypes that are limiting. Treat everyone equally.
- Respond to men and women the same way so that women are not considered bossy and men considered assertive in the exact same situation.
- Starting at a young age, change the conversation about where girls' and women's value comes from. Do not focus on or prioritize their looks – emphasize what they can do and who they are.
- Work together to solve issues facing girls and women, and respectfully disagree when opinions differ.

CONCLUSION

When we listen and respond to concerns regarding the needs of girls and women in Beaver 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.

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