

What Can I Do?

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

UTAH WOMEN &
LEADERSHIP
Project

Garfield 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 Garfield County and USU Extension - Garfield County, 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 in Garfield County, with input from 22 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: home and family, education, government and community, business and economics, and culture.

HOME & FAMILY

In Garfield County, parents are recognized as the most powerful influences on the lives of their daughters. Recommendations include:

- Build the self-esteem of girls and women so they know they are capable, competent, and valued.
- Develop girls and young women who set goals and know how to achieve them.
- Empower girls and young women by teaching them to be strong and do things well. Teach skills from changing a tire to wilderness survival.
- Have high expectations so daughters will have high expectations of themselves.
- Inspire girls not to be mean to each other. Girls and women should support each other and not bring each other down.
- Learn about the prevalence of sexual abuse and how to prevent it.
- Teach young women in dating relationships to establish boundaries and healthy physical relationships. Teach them to understand young men's minds and not be affected by flattery.

EDUCATION

Leaders in Garfield 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 educators and the community include:

- Conduct better maturation education for 4th, 5th, and 6th grade girls, including self-care.
- Connect students with role models and mentors who they can engage with and receive support from.
- Emphasize exposure to women leaders. Girls cannot be what they do not see.
- Expand awareness and facilitate access to educational opportunities for both youth and adults, ensuring they can pursue their academic and career aspirations.
- Have more communication about the options available to girls after high school. They need to know what options are available and how to achieve them.
- Prioritize education that leads to careers. Help students find their callings in ways that can provide for them financially.
- Provide enrichment and continuing education for women returning to work to help with the transition after having a family.

GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY

Participants recognize the challenges facing women in Garfield County, including lack of unity across the county and the need to develop women leaders. Recommendations for the government and community include:

- Collect county-specific data about women's issues and build a foundation of local statistics.
- Educate residents about the negative statistics regarding girls and women in Utah. Inform through social media.
- Expand the county perspective beyond Panguitch. Increase county involvement and unity.
- Have a community-based mission statement.
- Host community enrichment activities.
- Involve youth in the community at younger ages.
- Leverage opportunities for young women to bond together, uplift, and build each other. Being around good people can solve many of the world's problems.
- Offer a community self-defense course to help instill confidence in girls and women.
- Promote women's confidence and help women in the community know they are valued.
- Recommend leaders in the community mentor and build relationships with girls and teens. Provide mentors at a younger age.
- Spotlight the successful women who have come out of Garfield County as role models and as a way for girls to see what is possible for them and to help them to get engaged.
- Stress it is okay for women to accept help.
- Support mental health services for those who would benefit from them. Make mental health care more accessible.
- Teach about resources, prevention resources, and barriers to women's success.
- Underscore the importance of situational awareness. Provide resources and education to help women and girls protect themselves from potential victimization.
- Value and encourage women's leadership. Create opportunities for women and girls to become leaders within their peer groups and community, fostering a culture of empowerment and mentorship. Focus on leadership development.

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

In the business sector, Garfield County women struggle with limited opportunities for internal advancement and leadership, as well as economic challenges. Recommendations include:

- Acknowledge the low number of dual income families and high number of low-income families.
- Communicate available community services and resources to women, especially young single mothers, so they can access them.

- Educate women on career opportunities that can benefit them and their families and how to prepare for them.
- Evaluate employment challenges and address the good and bad that come with hybrid work and services.
- Promote networking for business owners. Ask local businesses to carry local products. Support local businesses.
- Strengthen the number of women business owners by providing education, resources, and support.

CULTURE

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

- Acknowledge that a small town where everyone knows each other can be a weakness when it results in shame and judgment. Deliberately work to counter that. Reduce the shame.
- Bring a friend into the conversation.
- Embrace being vulnerable, open, and real with each other.
- Emphasize that the greatest strength of the community is personal relationships, and amplify that to lift each other.
- Evaluate and address that men are the commissioners, principals, and on the school board and town council, while women are typically the secretaries and clerks.
- Inspire girls to be more responsible for their own lives – finding a husband isn't adequate planning. Help them think long-term when making life plans.
- Reinforce confidence in women's choices for their own lives. Support initiatives that help women and girls feel empowered and confident in making life and career decisions that align with their goals.

CONCLUSION

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