

# What Can I Do?

A SERIES TO HELP UTAHNS ENGAGE



NO. 42 | SEPTEMBER 3, 2024

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

**UTAH** WOMEN &  
**LEADERSHIP**  
Project

Kane 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 USU Southwest-Kanab and Southwest Technical College - Kane 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 Kane County, with input from 23 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, business and economics, government and community, and culture.

### HOME & FAMILY

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

- Counter the mindset that daughters have to compete or be “the best.” Help them recognize the value of their uniqueness.
- Develop critical-thinking skills in boys and girls at a younger age so they think deeply.
- Empower young women by facilitating self-expression and exploration without imposed inhibitions. Help them know that their opinion is the most important, not others’ opinions.
- Encourage young women to explore their interests. Help them choose their own path, whether traditional or not.
- Ensure that both sons and daughters have opportunities to develop and excel in extracurricular activities. Don’t prioritize opportunities for sons over daughters.
- Expose young women to a diversity of life choices to help them recognize the variety of opportunities available.
- Instill self-confidence in daughters. Offer encouragement without judgment. Ask questions to help them gain confidence, speak up, and share their ideas and opinions.
- Provide resources and education to help parents with life skills such as making doctor’s appointments and managing finances.

### EDUCATION

Leaders in Kane 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:

- Celebrate girls and young women being themselves, and discourage a competition mindset.
- Create after-school STEM clubs to nurture student interest in STEM.
- Establish some math and science classes at school separated by gender as girls are shown to benefit.
- Give girls and young women the skills they need to be independent.
- Have big sister mentors to help girls have someone they can look up to who can inspire them to excel.
- Incorporate a career-day series at the junior highs and high schools. Work with the business chamber and have women share personal experiences to show young women the range of options available to them.
- Offer job shadowing at local businesses to make students aware of opportunities and to help them identify their interests.
- Partner with the Kane Education Foundation, Youth Coalition, and Healthy Kane to have a broader impact.
- Prioritize better education around women’s health.
- Promote both trades and college as leading to careers so students can find the best fit.

## BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

In the business sector, Kane County women struggle with economic challenges, limited job opportunities, and challenges with childcare. Recommendations include:

- Coach on entrepreneurship and how to run a business to youth through clubs or 4-H.
- Cultivate financial literacy, mechanical skills, and life skills through the Women's Business Forum.
- Mitigate the rising cost of living. In many families, dual income is necessary. Examine how to help working parents.
- Offer more remote jobs to both retain employees and give flexibility to families.
- Examine the unaffordability and unavailability of daycare for those wanting or needing to join the workforce or secure a better job.
- Have affordable childcare that runs extended hours, ideally around the clock, for parents that work outside the typical schedule -- especially for single parents.
- Offer a community-based childcare co-op to meet the unmet childcare need. Find or rotate a space in a business or library for this purpose. Have working parents coordinate and care for each other's children. Find out more about what Moab is doing successfully regarding childcare.

## GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY

Participants recognize the challenges facing women in Kane County, including their physical wellbeing and the need to develop women leaders. Recommendations for the government and community include:

- Build a sense of community and a support system for those who are transplants and move into the area. Many feel alone if they don't have family locally or aren't part of a local church.
- Create team-building courses and retreats for women and girls to help network and build their self-esteem.
- Empower women with one-night workshops on do-it-yourself skills such as the basics of electricity, automotive, plumbing, and finances. Include basic troubleshooting a typical homeowner can do before calling a professional.
- Facilitate self-image and body acceptance workshops for women and girls.
- Host events with successful women that expose women and girls to opportunities and provide role models. Identify successful women to coach and mentor young women and single mothers.
- Improve LGBTQ+ awareness and acceptance outreach.
- Invest in a community center that offers activities year-round, including indoor swimming, arts and crafts for kids and parents, a game room, and classes such as cooking. Offer a place for single moms to meet and mingle where daycare is offered at a community center.
- Spotlight and increase awareness of resources for crime victims, including the Kane County Attorney's Office; the CAPP Program; emergency funds to help victims; the Dove Center; Canyon Creek; therapy referrals; and the crime victim reparation program.

## CULTURE

The think tank attendees acknowledged that the culture (why and how we do what we do) in Kane 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 fewer girls are involved in youth sports programs as they get older. Sports are central to the community and are where boys learn work and leadership. Help girls not self-select out and have needed leadership opportunities, whether in clubs and 4-H or other activities.
- Address the strong culture of gendered jobs in Kane County that suggests secretarial jobs are for women and leadership positions are for men, that higher-income family-sustaining jobs with benefits should go to men to support their families and that women can be offered lesser positions as a secondary income.
- Consider the implications of many women not entering the workforce; if they do it's a part-time job so they can take care of children.
- Educate religious leaders on women's issues. Have them encourage women to seek higher education.
- Include men and boys in conversations around equal opportunities. Expose them to the unique perspectives and life experiences of women and girls.
- Increase awareness of unconscious bias. Evaluate assumptions about who can lift heavy boxes; whether women want to stop working when they have a baby; and whether we hold boys and girls to the same expectations. Change ourselves to allow girls and women to achieve their potential.
- Keep asking questions and making room for everyone at the table. Be curious and don't assume you know what someone likes or is good at because of their gender.
- Question cultural narratives.

## CONCLUSION

When we listen and respond to concerns regarding the needs of girls and women in Kane 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 USU Southwest-Kanab, Southwest Technical College - Kane County, and to the many collaborators and partners in Kane County who supported the community conversation. Report authors: Deborah Lin & Dr. Susan R. Madsen.