

What Can I Do?

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

UTAH WOMEN &
LEADERSHIP
Project

Millard 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 Extension - Millard and Millard 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 Millard 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: home and family, education, culture, business and economics, and government and community.

HOME & FAMILY

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

- Change the stereotype of gender-typical tasks in family roles.
- Consider the parental culture, including work vs. home roles. Ensure both parents have a role in parenting.
- Equip daughters and sons with emotional coaching, emotional resilience, and the ability to deal with emotions.
- Foster self-confidence in daughters and inspire them not to undervalue themselves.
- Have conversations at home about difficult topics such as drugs and sex. Don't be in denial or think "It's not our kids." Separate parental worth from children's actions to be able to address children's behavior.
- Identify public figures who say negative things about women's roles or abilities and discuss it with youth.
- Underscore the value of education. Set the expectation to get an education or learn a trade.

EDUCATION

Leaders in Millard 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:

- Address Millard County's high rate of teen pregnancy. Teach sex education that includes prevention and responsibility, not just abstinence. Offer Sexual Risk Avoidance Education beginning in middle school. Educate youth on the problems with sexting, how to say no, and establishing boundaries. Consider a focus on girls – something like, “More than a Girl.”
- Build self-confidence in girls and young women.
- Emphasize the importance of life skills such as finance and civic duty.
- Encourage more girls to run for student council and have equal representation of girls and boys on student councils to ensure everyone is represented.
- Incorporate a mentor group for young women with role models to support them and teach life skills. Include topics such as self-love and self-esteem; science and math; and other life skills and support topics.
- Increase internship opportunities so students can explore careers before attending college.
- Leverage career fairs in conjunction with professionals from local businesses to help students decide on a career path before they graduate high school.
- Prioritize more high school students earning associate degrees before graduating.
- Promote awareness about scholarships and higher education opportunities. Make higher education more accessible and encourage more young women to earn college degrees.

CULTURE

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

- Acknowledge the role of religion and women's acceptance of traditional roles. Allow women to choose if they want to work or stay at home, and support them in their decisions.
- Counter women undervaluing themselves.
- Decrease the guilt of those who are not mothers -- for whatever reason. Recognize and appreciate contributions in roles outside the home. Change the culture and have role models showing the variety of options available to women.
- Don't put the major responsibility for childcare on mothers who put their careers on hold, take part-time jobs, or change jobs in order to juggle childcare responsibilities. Normalize fathers helping raise children.
- Put it on the table – have conversations everywhere about the issues facing girls and women.
- Stop women discriminating against one another or expecting unrealistic things from other women in the workplace, at home, and in the community.

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

In the business sector, Millard County women struggle with economic challenges, limited job opportunities, and challenges in the workplace. Recommendations include:

- Discuss the problem with part-time employment that does not provide health insurance or pay enough to cover daycare.
- Have a reliable way to connect women with legitimate online job opportunities. Consider an online learning program with a career path leading to job placement.
- Help stay-at-home moms transitioning to employment. Teach women to turn mom skills into professional skills, including on a resume.
- Include a strong local career placement program built into colleges, trade schools, and certificate programs.
- Involve on-site daycare at high schools to meet childcare needs in the county.
- Mitigate the cultural attitudes surrounding daycare.
- Promote and encourage work life-balance to get quality work, decrease burnout, and support families. Prioritize employees over budget.
- Reduce the gender pay gap and have more representation of women in company leadership.
- Recognize and address women having to put forth greater effort than men to be respected in the workplace.
- Reinforce a family-first culture and family-friendly policies in the workplace, including generous paid maternity and paternity leave, flexible work schedules, remote work options, compressed work weeks, on-site daycare, and on-site lactation rooms.

GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY

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

- Accept that others may not agree with you. Conflict is okay and can lead to solutions.
- Break the poverty cycle trap, which is designed to keep people in, not get people out. Help people get out.
- Combat the dire economic situation for many residents given the cost of living. Evaluate public assistance, including food stamps, to help women make it out of poverty.
- Develop more women to run for office. Nurture a willingness to take a risk and try something new.
- Elect more women as county elected officials, including county commissioners, and replace those who don't take women into consideration.
- Listen to all stakeholders to know how to best represent constituents when in elected office. Get away from the buddy system.
- Normalize and empower single-parent families.
- Raise awareness of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) so people understand the long-term impact of traumatic experiences in childhood. Provide effective and necessary early interventions along with resources.
- Represent and be a role model. Advocate for others and let your light shine.
- Share resources for young women and women to prevent being sexually targeted as well as how to get help in cases of abuse. Have events to inform about those resources while emphasizing the need to address the issue with young men and men.
- Speak out and share your ideas and life experience. Use your voice and speak up for others who don't have a voice.
- Take on hard things.

CONCLUSION

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