

# What Can I Do?

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

**UTAH** WOMEN & LEADERSHIP Project

Piute 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 – Piute 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 Piute County, with input from 18 individuals. With just over 1,400 residents, this represents a higher percentage participation than in most counties.

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

- Advocate for parenting classes and resources for parents to help strengthen families.
- Consider education for men and boys on “Healthy Father - Healthy Relationships” to give them tools and a solid foundation for parenting and relationships.
- Demonstrate healthy partnerships as parents so sons and daughters know better how to have healthy relationships in their future families. Communicate roles, how responsibilities are shared in the home, and how to treat women.
- Encourage daughters to make active choices about their lives to give them more opportunities. Teach them not to be passive. Let them know of the options available to them.
- Instill confidence in daughters and empower them to stand up for themselves. Let them know that being nice doesn't mean they can't also be assertive and advocate for themselves.
- Take primary responsibility to teach daughters so they are confident and grounded. Don't delegate to others.

### EDUCATION

Leaders in Piute 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:

- Continue to support schools as an excellent source of information for girls and young women.
- Expose girls and young women to more options so they know what possibilities they can consider for their future with regards to education and career. Broaden their minds.
- Have intentional equality in modeling with more women speakers from a variety of fields. Let young women see women who work in nontraditional fields -- girls cannot be what they do not see.
- Identify and publicize resources to help girls choose careers and work toward advanced education.
- Promote higher education as a way for young women and women to improve themselves and have more career options.
- Underscore that industries have changed and there are more opportunities for women. Myth bust by dispelling stereotypes and misconceptions about women working in traditional men's fields.

### BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

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

- Address housing issues.
- Be conscious that poverty is a huge issue in Piute County that impacts many areas of life.

- Boost skills training to help women be more able to find and improve employment.
- Encourage more women to take advantage of services from the Department of Workforce Services.
- Have more and better job opportunities, especially work from home options.
- Incorporate flexibility and family-friendly policies in the workplace to support women and families. Recognize that women can be more productive in less time if given flexibility.
- Incentivize equal pay for men and women in the workforce. Close the gender pay gap.
- Increase childcare and support for new parents given the very limited options in Piute county.
- Prioritize identifying childcare services and resources generally so there is affordable, accessible, quality childcare.
- Provide mentorships to help women develop professionally.
- Support women-specific grants for women who want to start their own businesses.
- Strengthen self-confidence in women and girls so they believe in themselves and what they can do and don't compare themselves to men.
- Teach girls and women how to use their voices to speak out, stand up, and advocate for themselves and others. Let them know how they should be treated and not to accept less.
- Urge more participation at community and town council events so there is better gender representation and broader needs are taken into account. Have more involvement from women.
- Value high expectations of everyone and encourage success for all. Don't discriminate.

## GOVERNMENT & COMMUNITY

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

- Acknowledge and raise awareness about the unique challenges facing women and girls and how to overcome them.
- Address and prevent child sexual abuse, including by using the book, "I Am Safe."
- Communicate and educate about the problem of sexual violence, how to combat it, and how to support survivors. Raise awareness about resources and how and why to report sexual violence.
- Develop stricter punishments and easier avenues for reporting crimes against women and children.
- Encourage more mental health resources and services.
- Ensure more women's healthcare access, including providers and affordability.
- Establish a recreation center or another location that can host programs for the community. Have fitness classes, wellness classes, and self-improvement classes.
- Have gyms in Piute County where women can workout, socialize, and get the exercise needed for good health and confidence.
- Identify classes and resources to help improve interpersonal relationships, including resources for parents to help them improve their parenting skills.
- Incorporate leadership growth opportunities for girls and women through camps, trainings, and other avenues.
- Offer more activities for women and girls to help them develop themselves more fully as individuals.

## CULTURE

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

- Appreciate unique traits of individuals and emphasize the value in differences.
- Acknowledge the advantages and disadvantages of a small community and the impact on girls and women.
- Challenge that bias is often in favor of men, whether consciously or unconsciously. While the women are doing a lot of the agricultural work, the men take the lead.
- Check the problem of unhealthy intergenerational norms which are harmful. Talk about appropriate ways to treat women.
- Educate to change the cultural narrative around women's limited roles and expectations.
- Evaluate, talk about, and address the hard things facing girls and women, especially in new settings with a fresh perspective.
- Expand to have more non-religious participation and leadership in the community.

## CONCLUSION

When we listen and respond to concerns regarding the needs of girls and women in Piute 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 Extension – Piute County and to the many collaborators and partners in Piute County who supported the community conversation. Report authors: Deborah Lin & Dr. Susan R. Madsen.