

What Can I Do?

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

UTAH WOMEN &
LEADERSHIP
Project

Sevier 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), the Small Business Development Center (SBDC) at Snow College-Richfield, and Utah State University (USU) Extension hosted a “think tank” gathering 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 2022 gathering of 20 leaders in Sevier 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: education, home and family, health and wellbeing, business and economics, and culture and community engagement.

EDUCATION

Leaders in Sevier 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 include:

- Promote learning experiences in elementary school to expose young girls to a wide variety of opportunities and choices for their futures.
- Increase awareness of resources that already exist for girls (e.g., 4-H, extracurricular activities, sports, clubs).
- Structure class offerings so that girls can take both advanced math and dance rather than having to choose between activities and experiences that are often preferred by girls and advanced education. Provide classes that will spark interests, develop talents, build life skills, and expand their view of what is possible.
- Give girls more opportunities to develop and practice leadership skills in all settings.
- Focus on STEM at all levels throughout K-12 and college.
- Disseminate anonymous surveys to all stakeholders to determine what is needed to support girls throughout K-12 and college.

- Invite women leaders and professionals in all career paths to visit schools to inspire confidence, reinforce the importance of school and training, and reassure girls that they are and can be leaders.
- Address the temporal challenges girls face by providing workshops for homeless youth, Department of Workforce Services resources, and on-the-job training.
- Help schools address challenges with the number of move-ins, poverty, non-contributing families, lack of motivation, students with special needs, and poor attendance so that they can better create a setting where girls can thrive.
- Offer and promote scholarships so that girls will attend and graduate from college.

HOME & FAMILY

In Sevier County, parents are recognized as the most powerful influences on the lives of their daughters. The home is the first and primary place where girls and boys are socialized; therefore, it is where they learn about their potential as well as what is expected of them in the future. Recommendations include:

- When girls are young, teach them to be confident, creative, and assertive.
- Through teachings and example, show girls that they can be wives and mothers, and that they have the capacity to do and be many other things, too. Demonstrate that it is okay and good for women to invest in themselves.
- Conduct workshops for parents who want to learn how to positively support, and not limit, their daughters as they dream and work towards their goals.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

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

- Help girls and women understand that failure is an integral part of success and not shameful or embarrassing, and to focus, instead, on developing strengths and interests.
- Invite the Children's Justice Center to provide trainings for teachers and parents to help them learn how to identify, report, and address abuse in all forms including substance abuse. Work with the Children's Justice Center to develop legislation that will encourage abused children to continue going to school.
- Address the prevalence of abuse by considering what prompts it (e.g., intergenerational poverty, substance abuse) and how to eliminate it and treat those affected by it (e.g., increase ease of reporting with anonymous QR codes, support/train guardians, educate about sexually transmitted diseases).
- Lower barriers to accessing mental health resources and support.

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

In the business sector, Sevier County women are impacted by conscious and unconscious bias and feel limited in their opportunities for internal advancement and leadership. Recommendations include:

- Help break intergenerational poverty by inviting girls and young women to shadow workers in the community by showing them what "A Day in the Life" is like for various careers.
- Ensure girls and women in the community are aware of all their career options and of the resources that are available to help them succeed.
- Support working moms and families by increasing quality, safe, and accessible childcare options and by providing grants to stay-at-home moms who open daycares in their homes. Business leaders should increase their flexibility and support for employees who are also mothers.
- Provide trainings for women to teach and reinforce skills that will help women with job seeking, career transitions, leadership, and parenting while working.
- Recognize businesses that employ girls and women and demonstrate positive workplace culture by promoting women based on title and performance rather than gender. Encourage service groups such as Rotary Club, Lions Club, and Chamber of Commerce to include women equally in discussions, decision making, and leadership.

CULTURE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The "think tank" attendees acknowledged that the culture (why and how we do what we do) in Sevier County is heavily influenced by religion. Leaders are concerned about the lack of diversity and inclusivity in the region. Recommendations include:

- Help girls and women recognize that they can be and are leaders by identifying when they have been leaders in the past.
- Educate leaders about the issues girls and women face and encourage them to find ways to make effective change; start with the individuals in this focus group.
- Encourage women to speak up in all settings, then listen to them, recognize the courage and vulnerability doing so requires, validate what they share, and involve them in identifying and implementing solutions.
- Evaluate messaging to ensure that people do not turn away from help or progress, even inadvertently.
- Invite inspirational and empowered women and committed male allies to share their stories and experiences to lift and motivate others in the community.
- Hold a community book group for women to increase awareness and prompt discussions for issues that relate to girls and women; one suggested book is *The Alchemist* by Paul Coelho.
- Ensure there is representation of women on all boards, in all leadership roles, and in all settings.
- Put forth legislation that empowers girls and women.

CONCLUSION

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