

What Can I Do?

A SERIES TO HELP UTAHNS ENGAGE



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

UTAH WOMEN & LEADERSHIP Project

Carbon 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), USU Eastern, and USU Extension – Carbon County 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 2023 gathering of 26 leaders in Carbon 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 (K-12 and higher ed), home and family, health and wellbeing, business and economics, and culture and community engagement.

K-12 EDUCATION

Leaders in Carbon County emphasized the essential role schools play in developing leadership, confidence, and competence in girls and young women. Recommendations include:

- Create opportunities for girls to gather, learn, and grow through formal and informal gatherings (e.g., clubs, groups, sports, activities). Include a strong summertime social program.
- Develop and provide STEM curriculum and activities for girls, starting in elementary school.
- Expose high-school female students to a broad range of subjects and potential career fields such as statistics, STEM, and business.
- Incorporate into K-12 curriculum historical examples of women who have succeeded in many fields and settings.
- Invite female role models in all fields to share their stories with students by drawing from the pool of local women in various industries; make this a highlight of Career Day.
- Partner with school administrators, teachers, counselors, and the business community to provide internships, shadow opportunities, and workforce development for high school girls.
- Start young to provide girls and young women with mentors, coaches, and role models.
- Strengthen effective learning by teaching to all types of learning abilities and disabilities.

HIGHER EDUCATION

Ensuring that women complete high school and obtain college certificates and degrees is critically important to continue a woman’s development. Recommendations include:

- Adjust college programs to benefit mothers returning to college by awarding competency credit for work/life experience and developing course offerings/schedules where women can take one course at a time to simultaneously meet the needs of her family and career.
- Emphasize the importance and value of a college education for women of all ages.
- Encourage high-school and college-aged young women to apply for and accept internships.
- Ensure Career and Technical Education courses in male-dominated fields are available to women (e.g., welding, mechanics).
- Make it less intimidating for young women in college to explore new opportunities by creating cohorts so that they can have experiences with others.
- Provide and promote scholarships to technical colleges and USU Eastern for women of all ages, especially single mothers.
- Share information about the significant impact a mother’s college education has on whether her daughter attends college.
- Stress that women do not need to choose between education and motherhood: they can do both!

HOME & FAMILY

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

- Break down social/gender norms by encouraging participation in nontraditional activities.
- Educate mothers and fathers on how to parent in today’s evolving culture, particularly as it relates to widening the cultural perspective

about not limiting possibilities and potential for girls and women, how to raise boys to value their inherent strengths and worth without devaluing the strengths and worth of girls, and what healthy relationships and family communication look like in the 21st century.

- Emphasize the critical role fathers and/or father figures play in a girl's development.
- Facilitate self-sufficiency in women by helping them learn skills and gain education needed to provide for themselves and their families.
- Help girls develop confidence by allowing them space to dream, opportunities to explore, and letting them know that we trust them.
- Model that getting a college education and/or having a career does not minimize the importance and value of motherhood.
- Provide support, mentoring, and resources for single mothers and foster care families.
- Stop the judgmental rhetoric between women who are or are not a stay-at-home mother by supporting all life choices as equal to the other.
- Teach daughters that self-care is essential to a woman's wellbeing.

HEALTH & WELLBEING

Concern over the mental health and emotional wellbeing of girls and women in Carbon County emerged as a primary theme.

Recommendations include:

- Address trauma through providing adequate mental health resources, using support systems, and shifting community attitudes about the importance of seeking help.
- Bring better balance to family roles and responsibilities to strengthen a woman's mental health.
- Disseminate available mental health resources throughout the county.
- Gather and share data regarding women's mental health, even negative data.
- Provide programs that will help families transition out of poverty and addiction.
- Reduce depression and anxiety through kindness and consideration, fostering collaboration over competition, and eliminating judgment of life choices.

BUSINESS & ECONOMICS

In the business sector, Carbon County women struggle with limited opportunities for internal advancement and leadership, as well as with conscious and unconscious bias. Recommendations include:

- Close the gender pay gap.
- Coach and mentor women through leadership development programs that apply to business and all other areas of their lives.
- Guide women into higher-paying nontraditional jobs.
- Help women create resumes that reflect how their work/life experience transfers to professional skills.

- Invite women who have succeeded in male-dominated fields to speak to other women, showing them that there are many opportunities in nontraditional industries and that women are capable of working alongside men.
- Remove barriers to childcare in Carbon County by making it affordable, available, high-quality, and safe.
- Shift mindsets so that business owners and leaders understand and accept that women can be successful in the workforce and that all fields and industries do better when women are involved.
- Train women in communication, negotiation, and how to advocate for themselves.
- Update assistance programs to stair-step women into better jobs and de-incentivizing remaining on government assistance.
- Work with the local business community to provide career preparation and business training for women, as well as incentives for companies that mentor, hire, and provide internships to women.

CULTURE & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The "think tank" attendees acknowledged that the culture (why and how we do what we do) in Carbon County is heavily influenced by religion. Leaders are concerned about the limitations and decreased value culture has placed on women and girls. Recommendations include:

- Build a teen center with showers, washers, and dryers to meet the basic needs of girls and boys in the community who do not have access to this otherwise.
- Celebrate religious diversity and diversity within religion.
- Collaborate with nonprofit groups such as Carbon Cares for Kids and Girls on the Run.
- Continue these community conversations to address hard topics such as: how men can be better allies for girls and women, changing public scarcity mindset to one of abundance, what fairness means, how systemic issues affect girls and women, and why there is a lack of opportunities overall for girls and women.
- Facilitate groups of women to support and mentor one another with all roles, responsibilities, goals, challenges, and work.
- Identify and remove barriers that impede the success of girls and women in all sectors.
- Invite girls to attend public meetings for city and county government to learn more about public service and political representation.
- Spotlight exemplary women as role models to expand vision and possibilities.

CONCLUSION

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