

# A Vital Bridge with the Community

PeaceHealth Cottage Grove Community Medical Center

## 2022-2025 Community Health Needs Assessment



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PeaceHealth

# Message from leadership:

## Standing together for health and social justice

Through the years, our Cottage Grove community has demonstrated exceptional strength, resolve and dedication in their efforts to support one another and build our community. PeaceHealth Cottage Grove Community Medical Center exists because residents raised their voices to protect their local healthcare infrastructure, establishing a collaborative partnership with PeaceHealth that continues to thrive today.

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic dramatically changed our daily lives, further exacerbating community needs. Once again, Cottage Grove came together, taking action to support a disproportionate number of families living below the federal poverty line. Social service and community benefit organizations formed deeply integrated partnerships and Be Your Best, a grassroots community coalition, quickly sprang into action. They mobilized local nonprofit organizations including the City of Cottage Grove, South Lane School District, coordinated care organizations, services, foundations and funders to strengthen and stabilize community support. Today, Be Your Best represents a robust cross section of community services that provide housing, food security, healthcare, mental health and youth services in partnership with our city, county and state government.

As Be Your Best has grown, so has our community. South Lane County is now home to Oregon's largest population of more than 350 indigenous Guatemalan refugees. While these families experience a multitude of systemic disparities, language and literacy are two key barriers that make accessing safe housing, food, transportation, employment, education and healthcare even more difficult. Community partnerships will help the South Lane School District Family Resource Center and the La Plaza program ensure that South Lane's Guatemalan and Latinx children and families get the help they need to access the early learning and other services available to them.

PeaceHealth thanks Cottage Grove's many nonprofit and faith-based organizations for giving their all to keep the community safe during this challenging time. We stand with you as partners in working toward social and health justice. We are humbled by what we have learned and look forward to forging the path forward in the years ahead.

With gratitude,



Alicia Beymer  
Chief Administrative Officer



Susan Blane  
Director of Community Health

# Our report to the community

## The importance of a Community Health Needs Assessment

Every three years, each PeaceHealth location conducts a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) as required by the 2010 Patient Care and Affordable Care Act.

Tax-exempt hospitals like ours—as defined by IRS Section 501(r)—use the CHNA to report current community needs, statistics and activities. We are also expected to develop an implementation strategy outlining our plans to improve health and well-being of the communities we serve.



We see our CHNA report and implementation strategy as much more than a requirement or obligation. Through this narrative, we are presenting the story of our dedication and service to the community and people we serve. Beyond traditional medical services and care, we are committed to helping people in need.

Click to view previous editions of our [CHNA](#) and [implementation strategy](#)

### WHAT IS OUR COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT PROCESS?

The Live Healthy Lane Community Health Improvement Plan partners—PeaceHealth Oregon, Lane County Public Health, Lane Community Health Council, Trillium Community Health Plan and United Way—conducted extensive community-wide needs assessments from January through July 2020, engaging community stakeholders from multiple sectors and referencing recent community studies and reports that are integrated into our Community Health Needs Assessment findings.

As a unique community within Lane County, South Lane developed a local Community Health Needs Assessment and Community Health Improvement Plan through Be Your Best, a South Lane grassroots organization. Be Your Best members participated in an in-depth listening session during their October 2021 meeting, where leaders provided input, feedback and insights into community trends and needs.

**“Be Your Best is starting work on the 2021-25 Community Health Improvement Plan by aligning South Lane’s priorities and strategies with the County Health Improvement Plan, including our role in the progress and development of the Community Health Center.”**

– Samantha Duncan,  
Coordinator, Be Your Best

## OUR KEY FINDINGS

**Access to quality and appropriate care** consistently rose to the top of our community's priorities as well as an overarching goal of providing early connection and prevention services. We identified a critical need for **improved community care and service coordination**, support for community organization capacity building and a call to **focus on youth, immigrants and other at-risk community members**. In addition, County Community Health Improvement Plan data showed how inequities have led to an increased need for **culturally sensitive and supportive services** to improve access and utilization of healthcare services and support systems.

**Investment in housing availability, affordability and creative solutions for families** is a key theme, including housing-first models, pallet shelters, tiny homes and other options. We are also focused on **support services including childcare, access to healthy food and access to healthcare**. **Investing in more community health workers, Peer Support Specialists, navigators and other traditional health worker roles—and locating them in schools for families, children and adolescents—is an additional community priority.**

The assessment further identified a concerning trend of worsening mental health among South Lane County residents, especially youth. This finding highlighted a need for **increased access to mental healthcare and substance abuse prevention**, including more safe congregation spaces with wraparound support services.

We hear these needs, and we are committed to leveraging our resources, funding, voices and partnership to address disparities and gaps in order to provide whole-person care in South Lane County.

## About PeaceHealth Cottage Grove Community Medical Center

**5** Average daily census

**14** Total licensed beds

**2.81** Average length of stay (days)

**129** Inpatient discharges

**48,815** Outpatient clinic visits

**189** Employees

**154** Active medical staff

**10,147** Emergency Department visits

Source: PeaceHealth FY 2021; Active medical staff as of October 2021

## WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE BELIEVE IN

Situated in an area known for its historic timber-industry ties, charming covered bridges and forested natural beauty, PeaceHealth Cottage Grove Community Medical Center is a 14-bed, 40,000-square-foot Critical Access Hospital that expands affordable care in our area.

Since 1998, we have served the rural communities of Creswell, Dexter, Cottage Grove and North Douglas County, promoting a healing environment for the mind, body and spirit. We offer a comprehensive spectrum of care that includes nonsurgical inpatient hospital care, a highly utilized emergency department and outpatient ambulatory care.

It's critical that PeaceHealth—as the region's major hospital system, including our medical groups, and network of primary and specialty clinics—provides equal access to high-quality, appropriate and integrated community care.

We work closely with Federally Qualified Health Centers such as Community Health Centers of Lane County, Cottage Grove Family Relief Nursery and South Lane Mental Health to ensure the health of our entire community. Partnerships with youth programs like 15th Night and Looking Glass help us provide the focused care and supportive services at-risk youth need to transition back to the community after a stay at our hospital.

# Supporting health justice for all

## From our very beginning to the present day

PeaceHealth was founded by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Peace, who traveled west in 1890 to care for early settlers and people in need. Their legacy continues today as we recognize that achieving health and well-being is a lifelong journey.

We are committed to our Mission: We carry on the healing Mission of Jesus Christ by promoting personal and community health, relieving pain and suffering, and treating each person in a loving and caring way. We are driven by our belief that good health, prevention and community well-being are fundamental rights. We support health justice for all and are especially called to be in service to the most vulnerable members of our community. And we believe that every person should receive safe and compassionate care—every time, every touch.

### BUILDING A NETWORK OF CARE FROM THE INSIDE OUT

Inspired by a challenge from the [Catholic Health Association's "We Are Called" Pledge](#), we have embarked on a journey to "put our own house in order." We recognize that change starts from within, believing that our caregivers can best focus on others when we put our focus on caring for them. This has been an essential element in preserving our 130-year legacy of community service and care.

With more than 5,400 employees in Lane County—189 of those in the PeaceHealth Cottage Grove Community Medical Center service area—PeaceHealth is one of the largest employers in Lane County. Our employees are a vital part of our community. Like everyone else, they have been deeply impacted by the pandemic. With this, we recognize the weight and responsibility of caring for both our community and our employees.

A close-knit community, PeaceHealth Cottage Grove Community Medical Center staff have continuously responded to the needs of their fellow caregivers over the last two years. From responding immediately

**“We have a responsibility to shine a light on the profound effect inequities have on health and well-being, and to do something about it. We are called to promote the inherent dignity of each person, to further the common good and seek justice through solidarity, especially in service to the most vulnerable.”**

– Liz Dunne, President and Chief Executive Officer, PeaceHealth



to those impacted by wildfires and personal tragedy to collective efforts to solve pandemic crises, these employees represent the best in all of us as they support their community and each other. In addition to providing care and resources, PeaceHealth continues to refine our hiring practices to build a diverse workforce. We are committed to implementing change that reflects our Core Values: respect, stewardship, collaboration and social justice.

**But we need to do more—and we cannot do it alone.** This is why community-based partnerships like the ones described in this CHNA report are crucial to our community's success. They enable all of us to address social determinants of health and improve care and access—regardless of where individuals are in their health journey.

## **COTTAGE GROVE PARTNERS BUILD A FEDERALLY QUALIFIED HEALTH CENTER**

After nearly a decade of advocacy and community partnership, South Lane County is opening a new primary care clinic on the Cottage Grove Lane Community College campus in fall 2022. The new clinic, the first of its kind in our area, will help meet the need for localized systems of care that address the whole patient, including social determinants of health that impact our most vulnerable citizens. Be Your Best has been instrumental in actively engaging the community to ensure the clinic is equipped to meet local needs.

**Community Health Centers of Lane County** supports Lane County's 2021-25 Community Health Improvement Plan by:

- Serving all people regardless of race, gender, age, preferred language, sexual orientation, housing, citizenship, insurance status or ability to pay.
- Providing comprehensive treatment and prevention services, including integrated medical, behavioral, reproductive and oral health services.

## **CAREER AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION**

Community Health Centers of Lane County, South Lane School District, LCC, and PeaceHealth are partnering to identify the most promising healthcare career opportunities and to develop the new rural health clinic as a real-world learning and training site for high school and community college students interested in healthcare careers.

Partners include Community Health Centers of Lane County, Cottage Grove Lane Community College, PeaceHealth, South Lane Mental Health and South Lane School District with the Be Your Best Coalition serving as the community voice and project advocate. Oregon Community Foundation is coordinating partner efforts to get the health clinic site ready to open its doors and welcome the local community.

Source: [South Lane Clinic-Lane County](#)

## **PROMOTING SOCIAL JUSTICE ACROSS LANE COUNTY—AND BEYOND**

PeaceHealth has taken steps to increase awareness of social inequities and promote health justice among patients, caregivers in our organizations and across the greater healthcare community. We also recognize the significant journey that lies ahead—with partners and with our community—to move the needle on health justice, equity and inclusion.

The people of Lane County still identify as predominantly white, but that is changing as our community grows. According to the U.S. census, Lane County population increased by more than 10% from 2010 to 2020 while also becoming more diverse. This trend toward greater diversity has accelerated in the last three years, bringing with it the need for more awareness, inclusive education and different ways to bring healthcare and social services to the people most in need.

## RECOGNIZING INEQUITIES AND ELEVATING PARTNERSHIPS

During these unprecedented times, it has become evident that Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities are at higher risk for chronic medical conditions. With less access to healthcare, immigration concerns, language barriers, higher poverty rates and the likelihood of working in close contact with other people in essential worker jobs, these members of our community are at a higher risk of severe outcomes from COVID-19.

In response, PeaceHealth has partnered with White Bird Federally Qualified Health Center, HIV Alliance, Volunteers in Medicine, NAACP of Eugene/Springfield and Catholic Community Services of Lane County. These organizations are all uniquely positioned in our community as trusted service providers supporting the needs of Black, Indigenous and People of Color populations, as well as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex communities.

Community benefit funds totaling \$35,000 were awarded to these organizations to support pop-up COVID vaccine clinics in the community with special outreach to vulnerable populations. This is in addition to \$10,000 in community benefit funding to Lane County Public Health to advance COVID vaccination education.

The Community Vaccination Collaborative organized by the Lane Community Health Council closely tracked disparities in vaccination rates across our community, pursuing innovative methods for bringing vaccination clinics to those who needed them most. We also offered vaccine clinics designed to create a comfortable environment for Spanish and Mam-speaking families. PeaceHealth Cottage Grove Community Medical Center and South Lane School District’s Ana-Maria Dudley facilitated the clinics in Cottage Grove, and included music, art, children’s activities and tamale trucks!

### A growing community...

#### COTTAGE GROVE:

**10,657**

Population

**10.02%**

2010-20 population growth

#### LANE COUNTY:

**382,971**

Population

**10.57%**

2010-20 population growth

Source: World Population Review

### ...is becoming an increasingly diverse one

% Race/Ethnicity Data of Population				
	Cottage Grove	Lane County	Oregon	U.S.A.
White	82	81	75	60
Latinx	10	9	13	19
Multi-Racial	7	5	4	3
American Indian/ Alaska Native	<1	2	2	1
Asian	<1	<1	5	6
Black/African American	1	1	2	13
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	0	<1	<1	<1

Source: [U.S. Census](#)

### Poverty's expansive grip

Poverty rate by race in  
Cottage Grove



71% Other



37% Latinx



36% Multiple Races



26% Native Hawaiian/  
Pacific Islander



18% White



10% Black/African American

0% Asian

N/A American Indian/  
Alaska Native

Source: [U.S. Census](#) Please note that data reflects only those who have identified on the U.S. Census as a particular race or ethnicity.

## CLÍNICA GRATUITA DE VACUNACIÓN CONTRA EL COVID-19

SÁBADO, 13 DE NOVIEMBRE 2021  
11 AM - 3 PM

836 E MAIN ST.  
COTTAGE GROVE, OR

- Vacunas disponibles para niños Pfizer (5+ años)
- Pfizer, Moderna (dos dosis), J&J (una dosis)
- Refuerzos Moderna y Pfizer
- Intérpretes disponibles en Español y Mam

¡DISFRUTA DE MÚSICA DE DJ,  
TALLER DE ARTE,  
ACTIVIDADES PARA NIÑOS Y TAMALES!

PARA MÁS INFORMACIÓN:  
[WWW.LANECOUNTY.ORG/CLINICASDEVACUNAS](http://WWW.LANECOUNTY.ORG/CLINICASDEVACUNAS)  
LATINO SOUL: (541) 514 - 0022

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# A year that inspired action

## Answering the call of an unprecedented time in history

2020 saw a remarkable convergence of critical challenges in the United States: social justice and COVID-19. The pandemic has cast a brighter light on how continuing inequities in income, education and access to health and social services inordinately affect Black, Indigenous and People of Color segments. As the pandemic has progressed, it has become clear that vulnerable members of our community were more at risk for infection, hospitalization and death.

PeaceHealth took a closer look at data from Lane County and our PeaceHealth facilities. For example, while 9.6% of the Cottage Grove Community identify as Latinx, the percentage of Lane County patients admitted for COVID-19 who identified as Latinx was 26.5%. Similar to healthcare systems across the U.S., our Latinx community members are hospitalized at twice the rate seen within the white community. We are aware of the vulnerability of our Latinx and immigrant populations and have focused on creating safe and trusted environments where these community members can get vaccinated.

By the end of October 2021, 75.3% of Lane County residents had received at least one dose of any COVID-19 vaccine (Moderna, Pfizer or Johnson & Johnson). Yet disparities exist. With vaccination rates for Black, Indigenous and People of Color hovering near 50%, the pandemic highlights an ongoing need for change, community connectedness and creative solutions for education and care.

In addition to pandemic-related challenges, another factor looms large in further hindering access to care and health outcomes for these segments. The population of Eugene and Lane County is rapidly growing; with this growth comes the need for more caregivers, particularly in general practice, dentistry and mental health. Yet the number of available providers for basic and critical care services is declining. This has created a significant gap in available healthcare services, driving up wait times and wait lists, and making it nearly impossible to access care in more rural communities.

Exacerbated by the grueling realities of the pandemic, there is an urgent need to address the workforce shortfall, improve the provider pipeline and establish quality community care options.

### CARING FOR ESSENTIAL WORKERS AND THEIR CHILDREN

When schools shut down in 2020, frontline healthcare and essential workers were in desperate need of childcare. Eugene Family YMCA partnered with emergency services and local school districts to set up emergency childcare,

### COVID-19's Disproportionate Impact

**8%**

of total patients identifying as Hispanic/Latinx

**26.5%**

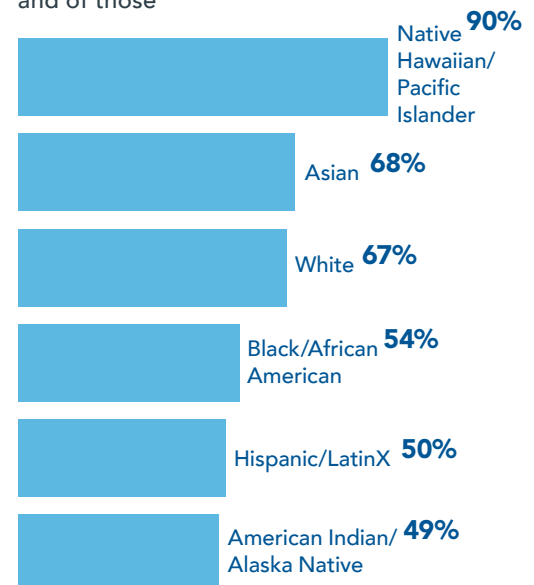
of patients testing positive for COVID-19 from Hispanic/Latinx population

Source: PeaceHealth

### Percent of fully vaccinated, by race and ethnicity

**60.8%**

of Lane County is fully vaccinated, and of those



Source: Oregon Health Authority, as of 10/29/2021



allowing vital staff and community heroes to continue working with peace of mind, knowing that their families were safe. PeaceHealth partnered with the YMCA to provide \$50,000 in funding for childcare and program infrastructure.

Since then, the community conversation has turned to a longstanding need with renewed focus: ensuring reliable licensed childcare services for all families regardless of financial status.

For families experiencing poverty, 2020-21 was particularly harrowing. Many lost their source of income during pandemic shutdowns, putting them behind on rent and living expenses. On top of struggling to keep their families safe and fed, parents found themselves in the unexpected role of homeschool teachers.

Many faced challenges juggling their responsibilities as full-time caregivers, teachers and working parents. The struggle to maintain self-care in the face of the unknown often resulted in emotional and physical chaos for parents, children and extended family members.

While schools were closed, 60% of families experienced childcare disruptions—with an even higher percentage for families of color. This put additional strain on already limited options for families that need non-traditional hours or drop-in care to address changing circumstances—and even fewer options for those with young infants or children with special needs.

The cost of childcare has increased significantly over the last 20 years while federal poverty guidelines have remained the same, leaving many low-income working families unable to access enough funding to afford adequate childcare.

To make matters even more challenging, the childcare workforce has diminished by 37% and childcare workers are significantly undercompensated for the

**“As our population ages, there is a greater need for healthcare. But many of our current providers of the same age group are retiring, so we need to attract new generations of providers. In order to do so, we must address workforce disconnections around skills, benefits, considerations for health and childcare because they are dangerous sources of stress for our communities.”**

– Meghan McCarthy, System Director of Community Health, PeaceHealth

skillset and training required for their jobs. All 36 of Oregon’s counties qualify as childcare “deserts” for infants and toddlers, meaning that there are at least three children under the age of 2 for every place available in our childcare programs. With strict licensure standards in place and few training and certification programs available, the childcare workforce will continue to shrink without support for and development of appropriate training programs.

PeaceHealth understands this need in our community and is committed to exploring and supporting partnered solutions that will help create quality, affordable and accessible childcare in all Lane County communities.

Many parents with young children face a painful choice between spending a significant portion of their income on childcare, settling for cheaper but potentially lower-quality options or leaving the workforce entirely. This childcare crisis in our community disproportionately impacts women, often forcing them to leave their jobs to care for children.

This exodus of women from the workforce is a concern for the entire community. Not only does it accelerate the workforce shortage, it also destabilizes family income. This puts families at risk for food and housing insecurity, mental health issues and other risks. Childcare is a community concern and must be addressed to support a thriving and well-balanced future economy in our region.

### Childcare realities during the pandemic

**60%**

families experiencing childcare disruption during pandemic

Source: [Oregon Department of Education](#)

**-16%**

decrease in Lane County childcare facilities, March 2020-August 2021

Source: [Oregon Department of Education](#)

**All 36 OR counties**

qualify as childcare deserts for infants and toddlers

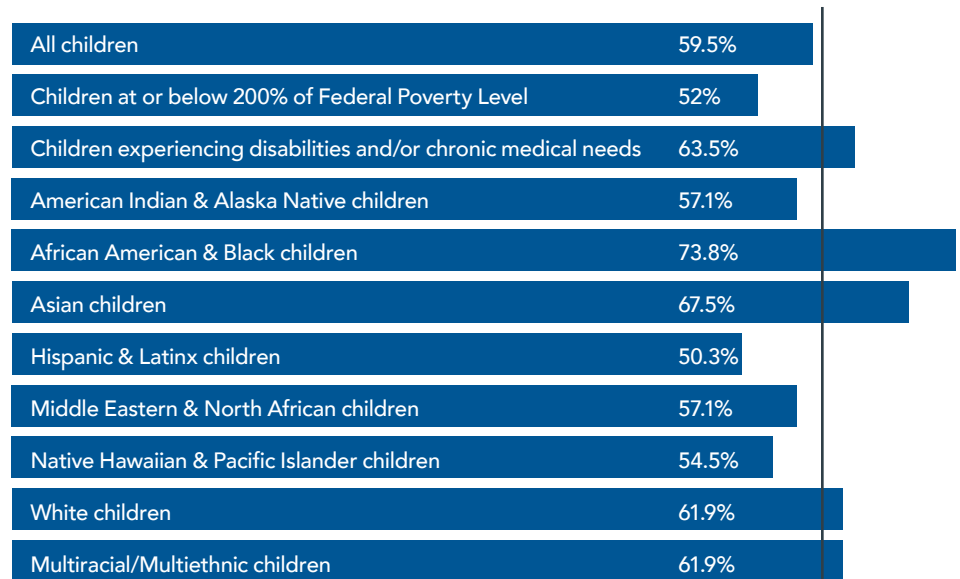
Source: [Oregon State University](#)

**up to 98%**

of all occupations pay more than early childhood education jobs

Source: [Center for the Study of Child Care Employment](#)

### Children whose care was disrupted by COVID-19



Source: [Oregon Department of Education, Early Learning Division](#)

60%

**1 in 4**

women who reported becoming unemployed during pandemic due to lack of childcare

Source: [Americanprogress.org](#)

**15 million**

single U.S. mothers most severely affected by school closures

Source: [National Bureau of Economic Research](#)

**60%**

childcare provided by women in two-parent households where both work full time

Source: [National Bureau of Economic Research](#)

## OUR FOUR PILLARS OF COMMUNITY HEALTH

We are determined to help create a healthy community beyond the walls of our medical centers and clinics. That purpose is informed by our four pillars of community health. Across these pillars is the awareness of our solemn responsibility to protect the most vulnerable and underserved people in our communities while promoting diversity, equity and inclusion in everything we do.

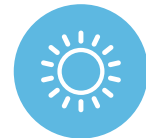
## PROMOTING HEALTH EQUITY FOR ALL

Our priority is to provide the overall best care possible to our entire community. To do this, we need to provide an equitable system of support that recognizes needs, focuses on overcoming barriers and builds resiliency for key segments in our community, including:



### HOME

Improve access to service-enriched housing



### HOPE

Increase education, access to treatment and prevention of dependence



### CARE

Expand knowledge, access and engagement with community caregivers



### NOURISH

Address food insecurities to enhance family and child well-being



# A roof for the night—and beyond

## Community coalition leads new food and housing security initiatives

Lane County has limited housing options for the large number of residents who cannot afford to purchase a home. As of 2019, 58% of the population rented versus owned and, by 2021, the county's vacancy rate plunged to nearly 2%. The pandemic eviction moratorium temporarily prevented homelessness for some families and individuals, but this safety net will soon be ending. Our community will likely see rent increases that will result in a new wave of homelessness and unsheltered living.

PeaceHealth directly invests in developing housing focused on preventing future homelessness. To accomplish that goal, housing investments must be affordable and include integrated social services. PeaceHealth partners with agencies and nonprofit organizations to holistically address community wellness through stable and supportive housing.

While our community response to building more service-rich housing options has been growing, it is not enough to match the disparity between availability and lack of income. We must do more.

### THE COMMUNITY SPOKE—AND WE LISTENED

We are working with our partners to target efforts that support homeless prevention services and upstream approaches for whole-person care.

Heading into 2021, homeless numbers had been steadily rising in South Lane County and across Oregon. Driven by the COVID-19 pandemic and physical distancing guidelines, traditional shelters were forced to limit capacity, further putting pressure on an already vulnerable community.

The housing market is even more challenging in rural areas, leaving Cottage Grove with significantly fewer available rental homes than Lane County's larger cities. As a result, families and individuals experiencing homelessness increasingly have nowhere to go and are forced to seek shelter from night to night. And many families do not meet housing option requirements. For example, local pallet shelters are weather-dependent and not available to minors.

### RAPID RESPONSES TO IMMEDIATE HOUSING NEEDS

Because families and individuals in need of shelter require immediate action and low barriers, the Be Your Best Community Cares Program created a new housing

### Housing realities of Lane County

**58%**

of Lane County residents rent housing

**2.01%**

vacancy rate

Source: [Department of Numbers](#)

### The need to help those experiencing homelessness in Lane County, 2020-2021

**1,342**

people experiencing homelessness

**545**

people experiencing chronic homelessness

**455**

people seeking emergency shelter

**265**

students experiencing homelessness or housing insecure, South Lane School District

**114**

individuals/families seeking transitional housing

Source: [South Lane School District/Oregon Department of Education](#)

security program in South Lane County. The program purchases motel vouchers to share with families in need, the immigrant community, seniors, people with disabilities, veterans and persons seeking shelter from domestic violence. Vouchers are provided based on self-reported information and without the use of screening tools.

Partnerships have been critical to Be Your Best's success in establishing the motel voucher program and continuing the conversation about housing options in our community. Key partners include Friends of Cottage Grove Library, Looking Glass, Earth & Social Justice and the Cottage Village Coalition.

PeaceHealth's \$35K in funding supports short-term housing costs, a coordinator role and community resource support for Be Your Best programming in South Lane County. The coordinator role is working to establish a traditional health worker network in South Lane County by facilitating communication and coordination among agencies to provide more Peer Support Services, community health workers and doulas. The goal is to facilitate local resource referrals and wraparound services.

Programming includes holiday food boxes, food access programs such as Veggie Rx, farmers markets, the Bohemia Food Hub, the expansion of mobile crisis response collaborations, Community Health Improvement Plan alignment and childcare resource improvement.



## HOME - Community priorities: Develop best practices for housing

The success of the Cottage Grove Community Cares Program and Be Your Best Community Coalition in providing rapid emergency housing response for unhoused individuals and families has demonstrated the restorative impact of community partnerships. Yet gaps in care and youth housing remain unaddressed in our community. As a result, individuals with complex healthcare and service needs and youth experiencing chronic homelessness continue to fall through the cracks.

PeaceHealth continues to build strong partnerships with community organizations and city/county governments that support and fund the development of innovative housing models that help chronically unhoused individuals make permanent change in their lives.

It will be important to turn models that gain success and traction into best practice programming such as tiny homes, pallet shelters and creative youth housing options that include safe places for youth to congregate and receive whole-person care.

### KEY BENEFITS

- Provides safe, low-barrier emergency housing for individuals and families.
- Includes wraparound services within the community.
- Ensures equitable access to emergency services with a focus on the immigrant community.

**“Be Your Best continues to see an increase in priority need requests such as staffing across all sectors, childcare, youth housing, food security and increased community outreach. There is much more work to be done, but we are excited about our community partnerships, the path forward and the impact our work is having on those most in need.”**

– Jackie Lester, Chair,  
PeaceHealth Community Health Board  
& Be Your Best Founding Member





# Extending care to rural youth

## A learning organization changes lives in remote communities

Teens living in rural areas face the same challenges as their peers in larger communities—but they often have fewer resources to draw from when those challenges reach crisis proportions. Poor economic conditions, high prevalence of drug use, and lack of access to social services and other vital resources are common problems that lead to poor health outcomes.

In Lane County alone, up to 15% of students are considered to have a high level of psychological distress, and students experience homelessness in the county at a rate that's consistently higher than the rest of Oregon. In addition, more than 25% of the county's high school students do not graduate in four years.

These statistics come from Looking Glass Community Services. Their new Rural Program extends robust services to youth ages 11-21 who are runaways, experiencing homelessness or at risk for homelessness in Cottage Grove, Creswell, Dorena, Saginaw, Lorane, and Culp Creek (approximately 25,000 total population). The program targets long-term solutions that improve quality of life, from basic needs and street outreach to case management and employment.

Frequent moves, temporary residences, lack of transportation and other crises make it unlikely that homeless students feel any attachment to a particular school, increasing their difficulties maintaining attendance and putting them at a greater risk for dropping out. *(American Psychological Association, 2015).*

These stressors also increase rates of family dysfunction, abuse, neglect and other traumatic circumstances—all social determinants of health and factors that result in young people running away from home. Homeless youth can turn to the Rural Program for assistance in getting their lives back on track.

### A SHORTAGE OF SPACE AMIDST GROWING DEMAND FOR SERVICES

For the last three years, Looking Glass has served about 100 young people annually, but there is a larger population of homeless youth in the area who will benefit from the Rural Program. The program is pressed for space, meaning virtually every square inch is used for multiple functions.

The front entryway serves as an intake space, computer room, library and study area. The office printer is located in the clothing donations closet. The tiny lounge space doubles as a group therapy room. Individual counseling sessions take place in the kitchen—the only space that can be made private.

These circumstances limit the number of clients the program can serve. Additional space would allow mental health therapists and substance abuse counselors to provide individual therapy for youth in mental health crises.

**“Looking Glass is a learning organization. With depression, suicide, anxiety and social stress on the rise, our programs are more important now than ever. We are optimistic about the opportunity that the Rural Program expansion will bring to our community, especially with its focus on education, housing, justice and healthcare.”**

– Craig Opperman, President and Chief Executive Officer, Looking Glass

## THE COMMUNITY SPOKE—AND WE LISTENED

We are working with our partners to increase individual, community and systemic resilience for behavioral health through increased access to a coordinated system of prevention, treatment and recovery.

PeaceHealth has partnered with Looking Glass Community Services Rural Program, contributing \$10,000 to renovate a local vacant building that will provide much-needed space and higher visibility from the road.

The program will go from operating in 500 square feet to a 2,000-square-foot space, allowing them to expand services, support, hope and capacity for unhoused youth by nearly 400%.

In addition to greater privacy for client intake and a safe space for counseling, the new building will allow for expanded services: a day access center with a shower room, laundry area, kitchen, study/dining area, computer lab, youth lounge and storage space.

This will allow the Looking Glass Rural Program to serve as a true satellite extension of the robust services offered at the Looking Glass New Roads Center in Eugene. Once fully operational, Looking Glass expects the Cottage Grove center to serve about 300 clients annually.



## Looking Glass Programming by the numbers, 2021

**100**

youth served annually

**58%**

first-time contacts

**112**

clients provided bilingual services

**25**

youth receiving peer support services

**38**

youth connected with healthcare and addiction treatment

**49**

youth served in residential treatment services

Source: Looking Glass Annual Report 2021



## HOPE - Community priorities: Ensuring a strong future

Beyond programs serving adult populations, there is an urgent need in our schools and community for increased access to mental healthcare and addiction treatment for youth and young adults. We are also in need of additional programs that focus on basic needs such as food, clothing and mail access, case management support, education and academic enrollment, public benefit enrollment, mental health, substance use counseling and community outreach.

15th Night (a program serving homeless youth) and Looking Glass (a residential and outpatient youth treatment center) are Community Benefit Organizations that offer partnership opportunities in addressing mental health crisis and preventing early addiction, helping to ensure a strong future for our community.

## KEY BENEFITS

- Creates readily accessible mental health services for youth in crisis.
- Provides enrollment and access to public health benefits.
- Encourages youth to stay in school through times of personal and family crisis.





# Improving inclusion in care and education

## Access to early learning and other services for Guatemalan and Latinx children

One key to improving health is recognizing the importance of providing integrated care in diverse settings personalized to meet the needs of specific communities.

South Lane is home to more than 350 indigenous Guatemalan refugees, the largest population in Oregon. While these families experience a multitude of systemic disparities, language and literacy are two key barriers that make accessing safe housing, food, transportation, employment, education and healthcare even more difficult. Community partnerships will help the South Lane School District Family Resource Center and the La Plaza Project ensure that South Lane's Guatemalan and Latinx children and families get the help they need to access the early learning and other services available to them.

The La Plaza Project helps advance early literacy and promote childhood health and development by improving indicators in all five domains in Oregon's Early Learning and Kindergarten Guidelines.



**“Our community health workers were prepared to serve Latinx, Guatemalan and Mayan communities in need when COVID hit and are prepared to do the same in the future. The needs our populations are experiencing are not new. Continuing to provide culturally specific language services, translators and diverse employees in the community is critical to providing robust, supportive and appropriate care.”**

– Ana-Maria Dudley,  
Community Health Worker,  
PeaceHealth & South Lane School District

### THE COMMUNITY SPOKE—AND WE LISTENED

Access to critical services, care and community resources is an important aspect of individual and family health. When the pandemic threatened to limit the availability of these services, we worked with our partners to bridge the gap.

The La Plaza Project continually strives to improve and increase access to care for indigenous populations and provide the culturally sensitive support that individuals and families need to thrive. For example, the project has added a trilingual translator/interpreter to help Guatemalan and Latinx families navigate the area's healthcare, education and social services system.

### HELPING STUDENTS—AND THEIR PARENTS AND CAREGIVERS

Indicators follow developmentally appropriate and culturally responsive best practices, and include approaches to learning, social-emotional development, language and communication, literacy and mathematics. La Plaza will support underserved and underrepresented parents by teaching them about child development, milestones, kindergarten prep, and social and emotional needs in the home.

The program will also connect families with other school districts and community resources, including healthcare. These connections help families build strength and resilience so they can be better equipped to raise their children for success in school and in life.

The La Plaza Project incorporates early exposure to literacy, school routines and self-regulation through the Kids in Transition to School (KITS) programming. This evidence-based program prepares children for success in school and begins an enduring parent/child partnership that will carry through the child's educational career.



## CARE – Community priorities: Growing traditional health worker roles

Engaging community health workers to connect children and families to healthcare and social supports is an evidence-based path to successful community care. Our community has galvanized around this initiative and is blessed with strong traditional health worker leadership focused on developing and funding multilingual and multicultural training programs. These programs engage the full scope of traditional health worker roles: doulas, peer support specialists, community health workers, personal health navigators, peer wellness specialists and others.

These trusted, trained health workers play a vital role in reducing healthcare disparities by empowering individuals to achieve their healthcare goals—in schools, in community centers and other settings outside of traditional healthcare.

La Plaza hired a trilingual translator and interpreter to help Guatemalan and Latinx families navigate the area's healthcare, education and social services systems. The translator will help families access the resources they need for successful resettlement, including healthcare, allowing families to thrive and children to be successful in school. PeaceHealth is excited to help build the community infrastructure that will support a robust army of community health workers in our community.

### La Plaza Program School- Based Resource Center by the numbers, 2020-2021

**400+**  
families served

**600+**  
children served

**1,000+**  
families participating in parenting  
education activities

**150**  
families receiving support with tribal  
language preservation/revitalization

**187**  
children receiving support to successfully  
transition to kindergarten

SOURCE: South Lane School District-Early  
Learning Center Programming & Activities  
Data Report (June 2020-June 2021)

### KEY BENEFITS

- Ensures equitable access and removes barriers to services for immigrant populations.
- Emphasizes healthy family units and mitigates disparities in social support.
- Supports early learning and successful entry into school.



# Nurturing fresh food for all

## Preserving cultural traditions and sharing knowledge between generations

Access to healthy, affordable food is a critical issue affecting children and families in our communities. We are called to nourish their health not just because we believe everyone should have access to nutritious food, but because food insecurity can lead to a lifetime of negative consequences. There is a clear connection between food insecurity and high levels of stress, poor nutrition and chronic diet-related diseases like obesity and diabetes.

The COVID-19 pandemic erased decades of progress in reducing food insecurity. In 2018, [an estimated 1 in 9 Americans](#) was food insecure—or more than 37 million Americans, including more than 11 million children. That number peaked in 2020 and still has not returned to pre-pandemic levels.

### THE COMMUNITY SPOKE—AND WE LISTENED

We are working with our partners to increase equitable access to culturally appropriate, nutritious food and breaking down social or structural barriers by addressing the underlying issues in food availability.

We are also expanding fruit and vegetable community programming, food education and low-barrier nutritional access points.

Food insecurity is part of a complex web of issues related to not having enough resources to meet basic needs. Households experiencing even periodic food insecurity are often struggling with multiple factors including lack of access to affordable housing, healthcare, steady employment and a living wage.

In Oregon, it is estimated that approximately 50% of Latinx communities are food insecure, primarily because many of them are seasonal workers and can experience job insecurity. (Source: *Huerto de la Familia*) The result is often a series of tradeoffs. While food insecurity is related to poverty, not all people experiencing food insecurity live below the poverty line.

A food environment index indicates access to healthy foods by considering the distance an individual lives from a grocery store or supermarket, locations for healthy food purchases in most communities and the inability to access healthy food because of cost barriers. The Food Environment index ranges from a scale of 0 (worst) to 10 (best) and equally weights two indicators of food environment: 1) limited access to healthy foods, and 2) food insecurity.

### PROMOTING ACCESS TO HEALTHY AND CULTURALLY SENSITIVE FOODS

While some areas of Lane County align with the national average for a positive food environment, a significant portion of our community faces food insecurity and limited access to healthy food.

### Lane County Food Access

**7.5/10**

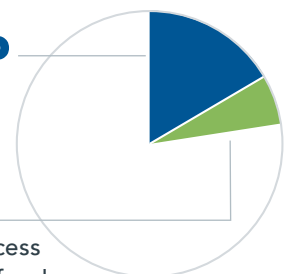
Food Environment Index  
in Lane County

**14%**

Food  
insecurity

**6%**

Limited access  
to healthy foods



Source: [County Health Rankings](#)

There is strong evidence that these “food deserts” are correlated with higher rates of obesity and premature death. Access to healthy and culturally sensitive food is critical for maintaining vitality and long-term positive outcomes in our communities.

Creating affordable options for healthy food and strengthening our relationships with food distribution centers—like food banks, mobile food options and subsidy programs including Veggie Rx and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)—can enhance opportunities for all members of our community to have access to healthy and culturally sensitive foods.

### **NOURISHING FUTURE GENERATIONS WITH THE KNOWLEDGE OF PREVIOUS ONES**

There is evidence that growing your own food not only improves nutrition and physical health, but also improves mental health by increasing time spent outdoors. Huerto de la Familia Garden will increase food security and healthy food access for Latinx and immigrant families by providing everything they need to grow their own organic produce. Families with limited incomes will enjoy increased access to healthy, fresh, organic produce with the added benefits of spending time together, preserving cultural food traditions and sharing knowledge from one generation to the next.

Unlike home gardening, community gardens connect participants with supplies such as fertilizer, seeds and plant starts. Educational workshops on food and garden-related topics for adults and children, community-building events, staff support and on-site referrals to food and health-related resources round out the program.

**“Parents who participate in the program care deeply about sharing their love of gardening with their children. In the gardens, their kids are active participants in hands-on learning about how food is grown, the importance of fruits and vegetables, and preserving cultural recipes and traditions. It’s a beautiful, intergenerational space that cultivates healthy habits, community-building and cultural preservation.”**

– Marissa Zarate, Co-Executive Director of a newly forming nonprofit consisting of Centro Latino Americano and Downtown Languages



The project's multi-year timeline includes building partnerships and land use in year one (2020), completing land preparation and construction in year two (2021) and a grand opening in year three (2022), when families will gain access to their garden plots and begin planting.

PeaceHealth has provided \$10,000 in community benefit funding to support Huerto de la Familia Community Gardens in providing local families with increased access to healthy and culturally sensitive foods. With the pandemic straining local resources, the Huerto de la Familia Community Garden Project pivoted to support nourishing efforts in their communities. Their goal is to provide 50 families with garden plots, gardening education, one-on-one support services, three Spanish-language educational workshops focused on healthy food and a community-wide food event by the end of 2022.

#### KEY BENEFITS

- Families learn to grow their own food using sustainable gardening practices.
- Participants are encouraged to try new fruits and vegetables.
- Supports healthy eating habits and food choice empowerment for individuals and families.



### NOURISH – Community priorities: Expanding food partnerships

Community gardens are an important part of the Cottage Grove food system. Huerto de la Familia will operate at Bohemia Elementary School, joining the Community Sharing Food Pantry Garden and the Harrison Elementary School Garden in providing fresh and healthy produce for low-income families and offering business creation and agricultural training.

Partnerships between PeaceHealth, Coordinated Care Organizations, the School Garden Project of Lane County, Centro Latino Americano, Huerto de la Familia, and food pantries and farmers markets across Lane County are central to sustaining the community garden momentum.

Together, we've produced community gardens, school gardens, Veggie Rx programs, Double Up food bucks and free produce pick-up programs where access to fresh fruits and vegetables is low-barrier and close to home.

The good news is that food insecurity appears to have been lower than expected in 2020-21, thanks to federal and local government response and private sector generosity. But the future is still uncertain for many families. Young people are at particular risk for a lifetime of health concerns resulting from childhood food insecurity. We must continue improving access to healthy food and education about healthy food choices.



# Final thoughts

## For times ahead

PeaceHealth Cottage Grove Community Medical Center is honored to work with many strong partner organizations and participate in vital programs that will significantly improve health and quality of life for the people of Cottage Grove.

We are humbled and grateful to serve and learn from our communities. We pledge to continue our collaborative work, standing beside our partners during these challenging times. We invite you to join us in our pursuit of health justice for all.

**TOGETHER WE WILL BUILD THE FUTURE.**