



A Vital Bridge with the Community

PeaceHealth Ketchikan Medical Center

2025 Community Health Needs Assessment

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 the 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?

Our process began thanks to our partners at the Ketchikan Wellness Coalition (KWC) and Public Health in Ketchikan and Craig, who are regularly involved in monitoring area health priorities and working collaboratively to address needs. Our assessment builds on this strong work and references other key reports produced locally, including a housing analysis conducted for the Borough, an assessment of food security and nutrition, and school-based youth surveys. The priorities we heard in these November 2024 meetings are referenced throughout this assessment.

Our key findings

Our assessment aligns with national trends and often indicates that the challenges and priorities being faced locally are part of broader, widespread issues.

- **Prevention, prevention, prevention.** Early education to prevent substance use among youth and adults was named as a priority, along with continued responsiveness to mental and behavioral health needs in the region.
- **Culture is a vital strength in communities.** Efforts that celebrate culture, honor heritage and integrate cultural knowledge improve health overall.
- **People here come together when it's needed most.** In the next three years, the community will see some of these plans to address health and wellness flourish in the region.

Addressing critical barriers to health like housing and food insecurity will continue to be priorities as households here experience greater financial hardship.

Who we are and what we believe in

PeaceHealth Ketchikan Medical Center is a critical access hospital serving rural and remote southern Southeast Alaska patients. PeaceHealth caregivers deliver an array of preventative care, emergency, hospital and recovery services with care and compassion.

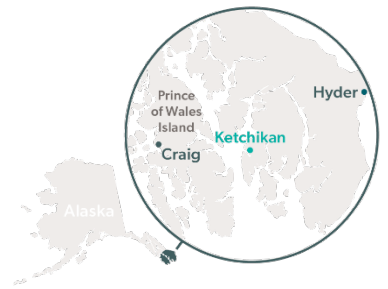
The PeaceHealth Ketchikan Medical Center and PeaceHealth Medical Group clinics are in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough and operate in Prince of Wales. Providing access to healthcare is challenged by the remoteness of rural island life in southern Southeast Alaska. Traveling to and from Ketchikan for care in areas like Metlakatla, Prince of Wales and Wrangell is often hindered by the weather.



The Ketchikan service area serves a diverse population that includes Alaska Native communities and a large Filipino population. The Borough sits on an island that can only be reached by boats and planes. Known for its rainy climate, the City of Ketchikan broke its record for most rainy summer days in 2020. Fishing, tourism and a resourceful community spirit define the area.

"I want to express my gratitude for the support and resilience that is felt and present in our close-knit community. In Ketchikan and our surrounding area, we face challenges that are unique to our environment and location. The spirit of collaboration enables us to succeed together. I am deeply committed to fostering growth and supporting local initiatives that strengthen our shared future and build healthy, sustainable communities."

*— Sarah Cook, chief administrative officer,
Peace Health Ketchikan Medical Center*



About PeaceHealth Ketchikan Medical Center

8.2

Average daily census

25

Total licensed beds

3.4

Average length of stay (days)

884

Inpatient discharges

31,883

Outpatient clinic visits

2,027

Surgeries

8,160

ED visits

144

Births

497

Caregivers

191

Physicians and clinicians

Source: PeaceHealth FY 2024

The community we serve

Ketchikan Gateway Borough		Prince of Wales-Hyder		
13,910 Total Population		5,753 Total Population		
8,168 City of Ketchikan	384 City of Saxman	4,120 Prince of Wales Island	1,465 Metlakatla	48 Hyder

Demographic highlights¹

In the Ketchikan Gateway Borough, racial and ethnic identity is as follows:

- 22%** American Indian/Alaskan Native
- 11%** Two or more races
- 10%** Asian
- 6%** Hispanic/Latino
- 1.5%** Black or African American
- 74%** White

In the City of Ketchikan, 25% of residents are Alaska Native and American Indian, 2.4% are Black or African American, and 12.9% of residents are Filipino. The K-12 student population is more diverse than the population overall. 50% of all KGB School District students are Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC).²



¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2022, American Community Survey

² CCD Public School data 2023-2024

Supporting health justice for all

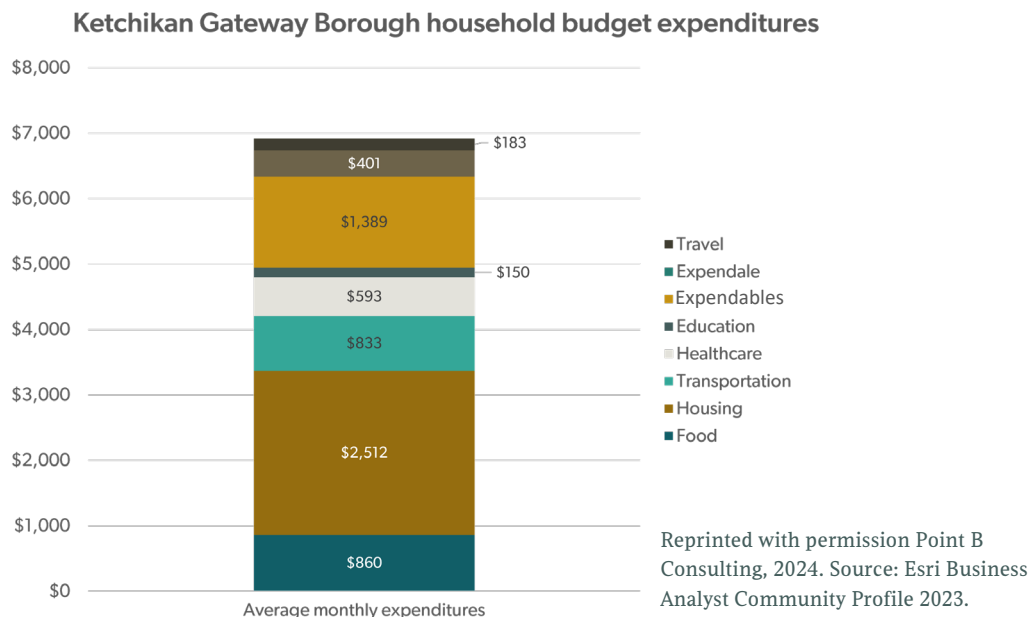
Our Mission

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. Fueled by a commitment to advance health justice for all, we seek to support collaborations that improve community health for all. We do this by continuously asking the question of ‘who is impacted most’ and matching investments to benefit those shouldering the greatest impact.

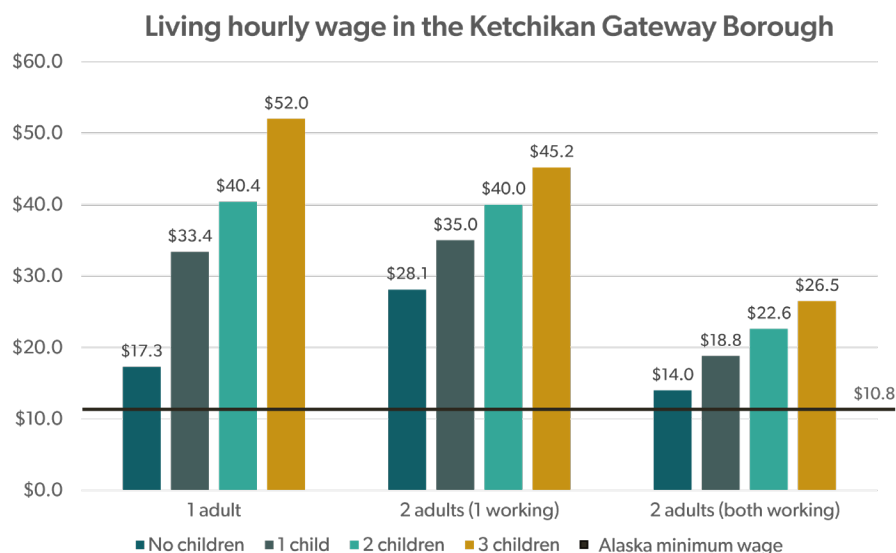
Financial hardship impacts health

Economic well-being and health are deeply interconnected. According to the World Health Organization, people living in poverty have a decreased life expectancy and increased child mortality rates. Social drivers of health (SDOH), the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age, are responsible for a significant portion of health inequities within societies. Financial hardship further shapes these determinants, worsens health outcomes and increases the risk of disease.

To understand financial hardship, we must look beyond the federal poverty level measure (FPL). FPL alone doesn’t accurately tell us who is struggling to get by in the community. Instead, we look at a blend of indicators that factor in the cost of living, median income, available supports, and sources of financial assistance. The chart below shows the average monthly budget for a Ketchikan household, with housing and food at nearly half the total cost.



The following chart shows how much a household would need to earn hourly to afford the cost of living in Ketchikan for a household with 0-3 children. The average monthly household budget in Ketchikan is around \$7,000, almost double the Alaska state average of \$4,300.



Reprinted with permission Point B Consulting, 2024. Source: MIT Living Wage Calculator 2023.

Many heads of household are employed and earn more than the federal poverty level but less than the cost of living in the area and do not qualify for financial assistance. Examples are included throughout this assessment where people are struggling, especially with the rising cost of household essentials (housing, childcare, food, transportation, healthcare, and technology).

Nearly half (44%) of all people in the borough live in a household with an annual income of less than \$75,000 a year.

Nationally, the only observed decrease in childhood poverty happened in 2021, when families benefitted from the American Rescue Plan's Child Tax Credit stimulus payments. The rising numbers underscore the ongoing struggle for financial stability faced by a significant portion of the population. Focused support and intervention to address the economic challenges faced by households exceeds the capacity of many local, dedicated funding sources.

More adults and children are uninsured in Southeast Alaska than in the state of Alaska and the nation overall. This is a concern because lack of insurance impacts when and how people access healthcare.

	Uninsured adults	Uninsured children
Ketchikan Gateway Borough	16%	10%
Prince of Wales-Hyder	22%	13%
Alaska	15%	8%
U.S.	15%	5%

Our community health pillars

Becoming a healthier community means going beyond the walls of our medical center and clinics. Four pillars of community health inform our priorities for health improvement and collaboration. Across these pillars is the awareness of our solemn responsibility to those who have been underserved, historically marginalized, and most impacted by health inequity and system injustices. These four pillars include:

- **HOME:** Improve access to service-enriched housing,
- **HOPE:** Increase education and access to treatment and prevention of dependence,
- **CARE:** Expand knowledge, access and engagement with community caregivers, and
- **NOURISH:** Address food insecurities to enhance family and child well-being.

"The Community Needs Health Assessment process serves as a conversation starter that leads to an understanding of our communities that statistics cannot create alone. At PeaceHealth, we find value and joy in building the relationships that make those conversations never-ending."

– Liz Dunne, PeaceHealth President and CEO

Elevating partnerships that advance equity

PeaceHealth has taken steps to increase awareness of social inequities and promote health justice among patients, caregivers, and the greater healthcare community. With the goal of eliminating healthcare disparities, PeaceHealth aims to ensure that all communities receiving care at PeaceHealth are treated justly and respectfully, with equitable access to opportunities and resources. We partner with diverse organizations, communities, and sectors to address social, economic, and environmental factors that impact health. We are stronger when we work together; this is why community-based partnerships like the ones described in this CHNA report are crucial to our community's success. Partnerships are key to making fundamental changes in practice, policy, and systems that will lead to more equitable health for all. Here, we feature one Southeast Alaska partnership that has risen to be a national example.



Home



Hope



Care



Nourish

Sama Sama Tayo Sa Kalusugan – Healthier Together program teaches culture is medicine

Beginning in 2021, the Sama Sama program was launched by the [Ketchikan Wellness Coalition](#) with help from a multi-year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. What started as an initiative to positively impact the health of the Ketchikan Filipino community through improvements in healthcare delivery has blossomed into a national example of meaningful health equity collaboration. The coalition has had many successes. Sama Sama has been responsible for improving outreach and health system relationships, educating the community, advocating for language justice, and leading cultural enrichment activities.

The effort has earned national recognition, receiving numerous state awards and new grants to expand the work. Ketchikan was proud to host the [E3 Health Summit](#) in June 2023, bringing together more than 125 leaders committed to bringing quality healthcare services to underrepresented populations. The three-day event created spaces for community members, health care providers, and other organizations to share their perspectives on what it takes to create more equitable systems.

Following the memorable summit, the Sama Sama team published their research, [Pakikisama: Filipino Patient Perspectives on Health Care Access and Utilization](#), in The Journal of the American Board of Family Medicine. Healthcare workers can now learn more about how Filipino patients experience healthcare and how to be more sensitive to culture in caregiving.

Most noteworthy has been the leadership and engagement of Ketchikan Filipino youth and young adults. The Fil-Am Club has played a big part in organizing annual festivities to celebrate Filipino American (Fil-Am) heritage, advocating for equity in education and engaging in cultural enrichment, like traditional dance and music from the Philippines.



E3 Health Summit Leaders gather from across the country at Cape Fox Lodge.



Fil-Am Club



Community priority: Shelter and affordability

Community need

2024 was a difficult year for homeless service partners in Ketchikan. There are visible reminders of the growing need throughout the city, and unfortunately, annual point-in-time counts generally undercount the number of people who could benefit from shelter. From 2022 to 2024, First City Homeless Services provided day services to 366 community members and 268 residents accessed emergency shelters before the organization made the difficult decision to close its doors. The burden of shelter now falls to Ketchikan's sole remaining PATH 26-bed shelter and a temporary 12-bed warming shelter open January-March operated by Ketchikan Indian Community. The need for emergency low-barrier shelter in Ketchikan persists.

Beyond limited shelter options, the cost of housing has been historically high and driven up by low vacancy rates. The supply of available housing in Ketchikan has been traditionally low. A household is considered cost-burdened when it spends more significant than 30% of its total income on housing. Based on that measure, 50% of renters and 25% of owners in Ketchikan are cost-burdened. Low vacancies and high costs put residents at greater risk of experiencing homelessness. These same housing challenges are amplified on Prince of Wales Island, which is even more remote. The lack of buildable lots, the high costs associated with shipping construction materials, and the high cost of building infrastructure in remote areas top the list of concerns. When the seasonal population grows, housing challenges worsen, and it is more difficult to house the area workforce. There is also a growing need for accessible housing, senior housing and low-income housing.

Faced with these growing challenges, the Ketchikan Gateway Borough conducted a Housing Needs Survey of area demands for housing.³ Over 1,000 residents responded to the survey, including responses from 67 people who were living unhoused. Nearly one in every two respondents reported struggling to find affordable housing in the last two years, and 61% knew of someone who had been displaced from their home due to rising costs.

³ Source: Points Consulting, 2024

Housing realities of Ketchikan

- 16%** increase in average median borough rent from March 2022 to March 2023
- 50%** renters spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs
- 25%** homeowners spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs

Source: Robinson & Schultz, 2023, Cost of Living in Alaska; American Community Survey, 2013-2018 5-Year Estimates, ESRI Data 2020



Wooded steps leading down to Creek Street provide shelter from the elements.

Faced with unique challenges, partners rally to start mobile program

Ketchikan Fire Department's Mobile Integrated Health, known as the MIH program, launched in 2024 with great support from funders including the State of Alaska Department of Health, Ketchikan Indian Community, Ketchikan Gateway Borough, the City of Ketchikan, the Alaska Mental Health Trust, and a \$100k community benefit award from PeaceHealth. Increasing housing instability and a growing number of non-emergent crisis 911 calls drove the need for this program. Data collected by the Ketchikan Fire Department showed that an MIH team could handle 30% or more of EMS calls.

Together, two MIH paramedics assist patients referred by partner organizations such as PeaceHealth or ambulance crews in delivering targeted care at home. They have also set up a weekly clinic to meet the needs of vulnerable and unhoused individuals. This preventative care model has led to numerous positive outcomes, including restoring independence to seniors and providing a second chance to those struggling with addiction. As the population in the area ages, programs like MIH are essential supports for people aging in place.



"Our mission is to provide individualized care, with dignity and respect, to the vulnerable populations of Ketchikan. We achieve this by bridging community resources directly to people, wherever they may be. With our multi-disciplinary response, MIH has helped to bring meaningful changes in our neighbors' lives."
— Gretchen O'Sullivan, Division Chief of Community Risk Reduction

PeaceHealth Investment

PeaceHealth has partnered with multiple organizations to provide support systems that respond to those in the housing crisis over the past three years. Investments totaling \$77,000 supported the [Love in Action](#) rental assistance program, [First City Homeless Services](#), [Ketchikan PATH](#), and the tiny home project led by [HOPE](#) on Prince of Wales. Together, these partners have been a vital support to unhoused community members and those at risk for homelessness.



Community priority: Prevention programming saves lives

Community need

“There is a lot that gives us hope,” was the sentiment heard from those asked about mental health in the community. While access to mental health support continues to be challenged, many choose to focus on the positive and all that is underway to meet the needs of those in distress. The most hopeful aspect heard was the increase in support named by youth. Eight in ten youth report having a safe adult they can talk to. The 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline also launched and has made it as easy as dialing 911 to seek help when in crisis.

Prevention, prevention, prevention is the tune all partners are humming in unison. Across so many systems, there is a shared commitment to invest in prevention to save lives. [Ketchikan Wellness Coalition](#) (KWC) received a historic \$3.75M grant to invest in youth drug use prevention over 10 years. KWC is convening partners from all sectors and, most importantly, youth to learn how we can prevent youth substance use. They are also adapting learning from places like Iceland, where there is a model that fosters community belonging and has dramatically reduced substance use in young people. There is a fundamental change underway that shifts the focus away from ‘*drugs are bad*’ to ‘*here’s how the brain works*’ and encouraging protective factors that help youth build up their skills and identity. School based supports are also important. Thanks to a program called Resilience in Supportive Education (RISE), there are now social workers on hand to support families and peers who are active in education.

This united effort cannot come soon enough as the entire nation grapples with a devastating increase in opioid overdoses caused by deadly Fentanyl. The Alaska Department of Public Safety reported more than double the amount of illegal Fentanyl seized in 2023 compared to 2022. The risk is here. In Ketchikan, teams are focused on education and making Naloxone (also known as Narcan) as available as possible. Naloxone is a safe medication that reverses an opioid overdose, and anyone can learn how to use it to save a life. [Ketchikan Indian Community](#) will provide critical leadership with help from a \$248K federal grant to improve access to comprehensive treatment options for Alaska Native and American Indian residents who experience the highest rates of overdose hospitalizations and deaths.

Mental health and drug use in Southeast Alaska

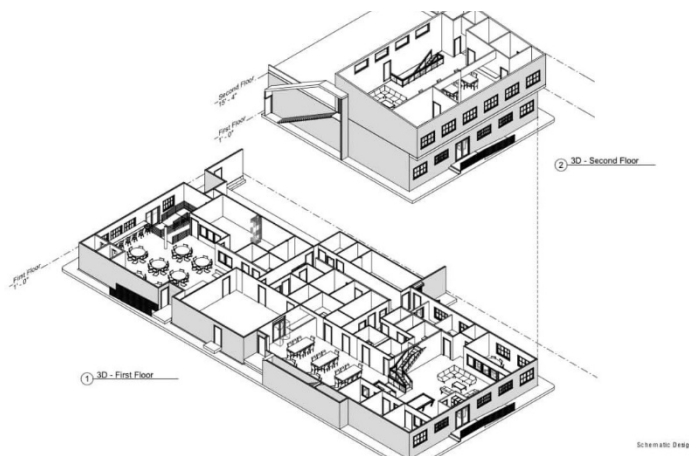
- 80%** of youth have an adult in their life they feel safe talking to
- 240** Narcan kits distributed by Ketchikan Wellness Coalition
- 100** opioid overdose-related ER visits in Southeast Alaska (Apr. 2023 to Apr. 2024)
- 36** people trained to use Narcan kits
- 18** deaths from opioid misuse in Southeast Alaska (Feb. 2023 to Jan. 2024)
- 25%** Ketchikan youth 15-19 years old had contemplated suicide
- 9%** Ketchikan youth 15-19 years old had attempted suicide

Sources:
State of Alaska, 2024. Opioids in Alaska.
Ketchikan Wellness Coalition. 2024. Survey of 95 youth ages 15-19 years old.

SeaLevel aims to transform the lives of Ketchikan youth

While there are many youth programs and services available in Ketchikan, there is still an opportunity to reduce the silos, increase community engagement, and lower stigma surrounding services. Inspired by youth, [Residential Youth Care](#) (RYC) embarked on a partnership with community agencies to design SeaLevel. This innovative community hub was developed to unify youth service providers with program partners in one, inclusive location. PeaceHealth made a historic \$250K early investment in SeaLevel. Many other partners followed with gifts from The Rasmuson Foundation (\$600K), The Alaska Mental Health Trust (\$400K), The Richard M. and Diane L. Block Foundation (\$150K), Congressional Funds (\$1.6M), the Ketchikan Gateway Borough (\$201K) and the City of Ketchikan (\$75K).

At SeaLevel, young people will receive the scaffolded support they need to successfully enter the workforce, maintain positive mental and physical health, become engaged and connected to the community while cultivating the skills they need to plan for their future. As a result of creating a safe, centralized resource for all youth, SeaLevel will positively impact community economic development, reduce substance use and crisis issues, elevate young people from poverty, prevent chronic homelessness, and improve the overall quality of life for our next generation of young people. As designed, SeaLevel is an investment in the youth and young adults in Ketchikan as well as an investment in the successful future of the community.



SeaLevel key features

- 11,000** square foot space purchased in 2023 for future SeaLevel home
- 1,000** youth and young adults who could directly benefit from SeaLevel
- 15–21** year-olds will be able access the safe and welcoming space
- \$4.6M** anticipated total cost of purchase and renovations

"SeaLevel is a solution center for our youth and young adults. It will be a place where we can catch and address in-the-moment needs and challenges before they compound and become lifelong struggles. Best of all, it will be a place centered around community and connection."

– Deborah Asper, SeaLevel project developer with Residential Youth Care, Inc.

PeaceHealth Investment

Over the past three years, PeaceHealth has contributed \$158,000 to partner organizations that work directly with individuals of all ages in our community to prevent and address mental health and substance use disorders. [Residential Youth Care](#) has been a leader in these efforts, elevating the importance of prevention in after-school programming and through access to the Ketchikan Youth Fishing, Harvesting and Life Skills program. Investments have also been made in Ketchikan Youth Court's Prime for Life education and [SAIL's Youth Employment Services and Transition Skills](#) program. All are examples of programs that reduce stigma and promote healthy living.



Community priority: Meeting the community's unique needs

Community need

Community caregiving is about engaging people in their everyday lives and addressing factors impacting their health in places where people live and work. Since social and economic factors are responsible for 40% of a person's total health, health advocates, peers, volunteers, and roles like community health workers (CHWs) play an essential role in helping people navigate available resources. The community has a thriving network of these types of roles and volunteers serving diverse communities.

Rural access to medical, dental, and mental health care continues to be a top priority. There is data to support additional efforts and attention. CHWs are respected experts on the barriers faced by community members. They are also trusted messengers when it comes to health outreach. PeaceHealth and others rely on these trusted individuals to ensure that outreach and approaches to care are linguistically and culturally responsive.

Nearly everything is more costly and harder to access in Southeast Alaska. From preventative care like health screenings to finding a mental health therapist, families face unique hardships that can be eased when services are in place to help with navigation.

Community Connections expands to meet unique needs

In 2023, the Therapeutic Foster Care (TFC) services at [Community Connections](#) serving Ketchikan and Prince of Wales youth (aged 2-21) grew to serve more. TFC helps ensure that youth in foster care with significant mental health concerns are not forced to leave their home community, family, and school ties to receive treatment.

Community Connections has increased its support for TFC families, and this, in turn, has meant more youth are cared for close to home in a family environment. In addition to a \$100K grant from PeaceHealth, Community Connections received over a million dollars in grants from funders to expand staffing for the program and purchase two additional 3-5-bedroom agency-owned foster homes.

Barriers impacting how people experience care

Cost of healthcare, dental, and mental health services

Availability of quality interpretation when needed

Services that are not culturally responsive

Facing stigma, racism, or discrimination when seeking care

Location and accessibility of services, e.g. transportation, virtual options

Cross-cultural learning: A bridge to health

Efforts like Sama Sama Tayo Sa Kalusugan bring together communities with those in service sectors (healthcare, social services, education, and the arts) to bridge new understandings and improve health. In the sweet spot where people come together, cross-cultural learning and communication thrive. Sama Sama has organized health education, raised awareness through film and podcast episodes, and hosted cultural enrichment events that invite the whole community. The *Hats Off to Health* education series has featured many topics, including health insurance, CPR training, blood pressure and breast cancer awareness.



PeaceHealth caregiver Ruby Lorenzo speaks to those gathered for Hats Off to Health education promoting breast health and mammogram screening. The theme was *Malasakit*, a Tagalog word meaning to care for someone as if they were our own.



"I am overjoyed knowing that we're creating opportunities to transform and revitalize our once 'invisible' yet vibrant culture. By incorporating culture into outreach, we've found the secret ingredient needed to improve overall health. Culture truly is medicine."

– Alma Manabat Parker, Health Equity director, Ketchikan Wellness Coalition

PeaceHealth Investment

Over the past three years, PeaceHealth has contributed \$146K to organizations that work directly with individuals of all ages to build a network of care support. Partners include Ketchikan Public Health, [Ketchikan Wellness Coalition](#), [Ketchikan Mobile Integrated Health](#) and [Community Connections'](#) Therapeutic Foster Care program. Each of these partners has brought forward innovative solutions identified with help from the community. These supports range from help accessing health services, pop-up health clinics, finding health and social services, education and more. The combined efforts are making a real difference.



Community priority: Reduce food insecurity

Community need

Access to healthy, affordable food is a critical issue affecting children and families in our communities. We believe everyone should have access to nutritious food because the alternative can lead to a lifetime of adverse health 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.

Food insecurity is part of a complex web of issues related to not having enough resources to meet basic needs. Even households that only experience periodic food insecurity often struggle with multiple challenges, including affordable housing, childcare, healthcare, steady employment, and a living wage. The result is usually a series of tradeoffs that explain in part the rise in demand for food pantries, meal programs, and other supports. In Southeast Alaska island communities, shipping costs add to the increase in food prices and are felt by residents at the register.

Local data shows both need and low utilization of programs. During the 2022-2023 school year, 37% of Ketchikan School District students qualify for free and reduced lunch.⁴ Unfortunately, fewer people have been signing up to receive Supplement Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, also known as food stamps. Less than 10% of Alaskans are receiving SNAP benefits. Nationwide, most people who participate in SNAP are children, elderly adults or people with a disability. Many people may falsely assume they might not qualify and be surprised to find out they are eligible.

Other factors also play a role in someone's overall food security. Lifelong community member and dietitian Jessi Teune writes, "Reduced access to food is related to more than the high cost of food. In Ketchikan, we experience shipping delays, reduced quality of food, and a shorter growing season. In addition to providing funds for foods, we need to educate for culinary literacy, increase access to reliable transportation, reduce stigma around food assistance programs, and encourage healthy harvesting of traditional foods."

Increased food costs add to burden

59% higher cost of groceries in Ketchikan compared to the national average

\$4.61 average cost of a dozen eggs in Alaska in 2023 up from the national average cost of \$1.50 in 2021



⁴ National Center for Education Stats, 2024; Points Consulting, 2024



"Addressing food security is so much more than giving people food. When we talk about increasing someone's access to food, we have to consider and address the actual barriers and facilitators to food security. We have to look past growing tomatoes in a greenhouse, which may provide nutrition, but not consistently enough calories needed to survive."

– Jessi Teune, MS, RDN, LD, lifelong community member

Community Gardens inspire resilience

The [Ketchikan Community Gardens](#) project is a series of demonstration gardens that build connection, increase food resiliency and knowledge, and provide a place for food education. People can learn how to create a raised garden bed, make a worm bin and harvest from the garden. Workshops offered in the gardens focus on reaching those experiencing food insecurity, especially elders and youth.

The Gardens have been successful in uniting many different partners, including the school district, the Tongass Federal Credit Union, the faith community, the senior day center, the Ketchikan Indian Community, and many others. Growing food in a rainy and temperate climate can seem daunting for many, but the Gardens are changing that. People are seeing success in bountiful harvests.

PeaceHealth investment

Three years of investments totaling \$39K were distributed to [Love in Action's](#) grocery assistance program and [Ketchikan Community Gardens](#). [Residential Youth Care's](#) after-school program, and [SAIL's](#) youth employment services and transition skills program also received funds to supplement the meals provided to program participants. The increase in requests was evidence of the growing need. All these partners and more have helped grow the network of accessible nutritious food.

Benefits of community gardens

- **Improved mental health:** Research shows a proven link between time spent with your hands in the soil and positive mental health.
- **New experiences:** Youth and children are encouraged to try new fruits and vegetables.
- **50** gardeners participated in the 2024 gardening season.
- **Record harvests:** The largest garlic bulb harvested was **9 inches** in diameter. **30 lbs.** of Native Haida potatoes were harvested and donated for PeaceHealth caregiver lunch.

"I have seen how important it is to provide a hot meal for our community members who are in need. We cater to all populations regardless of age, gender, or lifestyle. The look on people's faces when they receive a hot meal is priceless." - Mary Ann Pahang, PeaceHealth Long Term Care Activities Director and Love in Action Soup Kitchen volunteer