

Steering Committee

Crook County Health Initiative Moves Forward Independent of Blue Zones

This fall, more than 130 local residents gathered at Meadow Lakes to discuss making Prineville the newest site of Blue Zones, a community-led wellbeing project designed to make healthy choices easier for everyone.

In August 2016, the steering committee applied for Prineville to be a new Blue Zones site, and this large meeting highlighted the community's dedication to becoming healthier. Ultimately, Prineville was not selected to partner with Blue Zones; however, based on the enthusiasm of the community members who participated in the process, the steering committee has chosen to continue the activities that will lead to a healthier Crook County.

The new effort will follow many of the principles of the Blue Zone work, but will be renamed to reflect the values and priorities of Crook County. "Right now we're thinking about a contest where community members can vote on a new name for the effort. We have some fun ideas, but there are many creative people in Crook County who probably have better ideas than we could ever come up with," says Wayne Looney, Kiwanian and member of the organizing committee.

The steering committee is excited to begin work on the Crook County led initiative. With the effort being community led, the pace and program will more accurately reflect Crook County's values—and will make the initiative sustainable long-term. The steering committee is ready to roll up their sleeves and get busy, and one of the first steps will be a community vote to name the new initiative.

"While we didn't get the demonstration grant, the committee is looking for grant funds from other organizations," says Muriel DeLaVergne-Brown, Crook County Health and Human Services Director and member of the organizing committee, "We recognize the value of a project like this, and we are extremely excited about the huge amount of positive feedback so far from the community. That is why the committee is committed to continuing this effort. St. Charles Health System has already committed \$25,000 to get the ball rolling."

The committee's first priority is to hire someone from the local community who can lead the charge on this project. "We know from years of experience that asking people who already have full time jobs to take on a project of this size as a side project dooms it to failure," says Donna Barnes, Accounting Manager at Ochoco Lumber and member of the organizing committee. "As soon as we raise a few more dollars, we will hire a coordinator to keep the processes moving forward."

The steering committee's next steps will be to disperse a survey for community members to vote on a name for the project, and vote for the focus of the project. A community meeting is also being planned for April. Please follow Crook County Foundation's Facebook page to read new information as it is released. If you have questions, or want to be added to our listserv, contact Holly Wenzel at hwenzel@h.co.crook.or.us or 541.447.3260 ext 122.

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Crook County