

Community Efforts to Advance Intergenerational Opportunity and Success

Message from Lori Pfginst

Chief of Programs and Policy, Community Services Division, Economic Services Administration



Greetings,

At this time last year, DSHS received a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to advance policies supporting the intergenerational opportunity and success of all Washingtonians. Recognizing that communities are the foremost experts on how to build opportunity and well-being for their residents, we embarked on

a statewide listening tour to learn about the most promising community-led efforts working to ensure future generations can reach their full potential.

We are so glad we did.

Halfway through these listening sessions, we have grown more humbled, wiser, and inspired in ways we never anticipated. Organizations throughout the state graciously welcomed us into their communities and spent hours telling us about the unique challenges their residents face, as well as the innovative ways they are working together to build a foundation of opportunity from which residents of all ages can thrive.

What we have learned so far is that communities across the state are grappling with an economy that is making it nearly impossible for children and families to get ahead – there are too few jobs that allow families to make ends meet, while building blocks essential for well-being, like housing and child care, are growing increasingly unaffordable. Racism – endemic throughout our systems, policies, and communities – makes it even harder for children and families of color to thrive. This shared reality is often compounded by conditions unique to each community – wild fires in the Okanagan, an opioid crisis in the Skagit valley, gentrification of urban areas (e.g., Seattle, Tacoma) and its impact on suburban areas (e.g., Renton), or lack of investment in rural economic development in counties like Lewis, Douglas, and Chelan – to name a few.

The stories we heard underscored the need for a stronger foundation from which individuals, children, families, and whole communities can thrive. And the best part of our listening tours has been learning about how organizations throughout Washington state are playing a critical role in laying that foundation.

Organizations like **Vision House** (Renton, South King County) and **El Centro de la Raza's Plaza Roberto Maestas** (Beacon Hill, Seattle), for example, are two exemplary models providing transit-oriented affordable housing, child care, and job training opportunities for residents, giving them what they need to build careers and invest in their future. The **Independent Learning Center** (Methow Valley, Okanagan) – an alternative program for high school students – reached a 100% graduation rate in its first year of operation. The **Foundation for Academic Endeavors** (Mt. Vernon, Skagit County) and the **Casino Road Academy** (Everett, Snohomish County) – are supporting two generations of immigrant families by providing early learning opportunities for children, as well as job opportunities for their parents. These are just a handful of the amazing community-led programs we learned about in our travels – more are highlighted in this report.

With so much inspiring and innovative work happening, we left each of our visits with the same conclusion and question – communities know what their residents need to thrive, so how can DSHS be a better partner in serving residents throughout these communities?

That question is our north star as we continue our listening sessions into 2018 and begin co-leading Governor Inslee's new Workgroup on Poverty Reduction (see page 4).

We hope you enjoy this mid-point reflection and are as excited as we are about opportunities on the horizon. Thank you to all of the individuals and organizations that have so generously hosted us and shared the amazing work you are doing to ensure every Washingtonian has what they need to thrive and reach their full potential. We look forward to future collaboration in 2018.

With gratitude,

Lori Pfginst
Chief of Programs and Policy



Listening to Learn: *Tales from our Travels*

Site visits were chosen using data showing areas where a high share of residents are struggling to make ends meet. DSHS reached out to community partners in the region – including community foundations, United Ways, Community Action Partners, and our own Community Service Offices – to co-create a day of learning with individuals and organizations building social and economic well-being for residents.

So far, we have met with over 350 community leaders, elected officials, service providers, advocates, and resident experts in 10 communities throughout the state. Each session has been unique

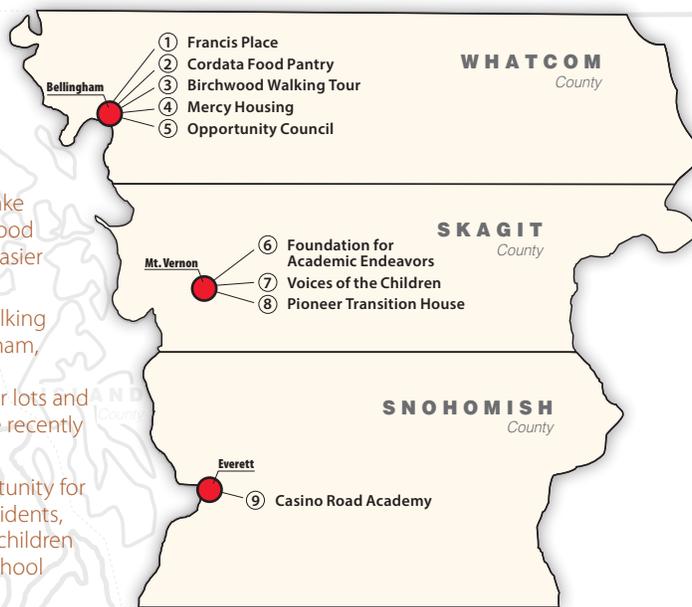
in its format and content – all of them have been invaluable to advancing our knowledge and understanding of how to better advance intergenerational opportunity and success for all Washingtonians.

Many of the locations we visited also facilitated in person site visits with community-based organizations that were especially promising or effective at reducing poverty. Listed on the following three pages are some of these bright spots that local community hosts highlighted to us.

August 28, 2017

Whatcom County Bright Spots:

- 1 **Francis Place (Bellingham)** – a permanent supportive housing project designed and operated by Catholic Community Services and Catholic Housing Services. Offers affordable housing to individuals that have experienced chronic homelessness.
- 2 **Cordata Food Pantry (Bellingham)** – a satellite of the Bellingham Food Bank designed to increase accessibility to hungry Bellingham families that live in an area of town that make it challenging for them to access the main food bank facility. Food bank on wheels provides the same great food while creating easier access to residents.
- 3 **Birchwood Walking Tour (Bellingham)** – The Birchwood Walking Tour (Birchwood Neighborhood) located in northwest Bellingham, WA focuses on developing affordable housing. Historically, the neighborhood has consisted of single family homes with larger lots and landscaping to lend towards a rural atmosphere, and has more recently seen growth of apartment and condominium complexes.
- 4 **Mercy Housing (Bellingham)** – an affordable housing opportunity for agricultural workers at Sterling Meadows Apartments. Staff, residents, and schools partner together to support academic success of children residents and have recently experienced an increase in high school graduation rates.
- 5 **Opportunity Council (Bellingham)** – a Community Action Agency servicing Island, San Juan, and Whatcom Counties. They are offering Project X, a 2-year fiscal resiliency pilot that seeks to break the cycle of generational poverty for families experiencing financial hardship.



November 28, 2017

Snohomish County Bright Spots:

- 9 **Casino Road Academy (Everett)** – a formal coalition between the YMCA, Seattle Goodwill Industries, and Edmonds Community College, dedicated to providing Adult Basic Education classes to new immigrants while also offering free onsite quality early learning for their children. ChildStrive is also onsite, which provides home visiting services and other supports to help families maximize their child's abilities.

July 12, 2017

Skagit County Bright Spots:

- 6 **Foundation for Academic Endeavors (Mt. Vernon)** – a summer early learning and tutoring program located on Skagit Valley College's campus serving the migrant farmworker population in Skagit County; for older children, the program offers STEM activities.
- 7 **Voices of the Children (Mt. Vernon)** – an organization that pairs teens around the world in collaborative art projects to shine a spotlight on humanitarian crises, encourage community engagement and personal growth. Teens in Skagit County participated in several workshops where they explored and shared their understanding of 'compassion' and then expressed those interpretations through art by creating a mural in downtown Mt. Vernon.
- 8 **Pioneer Transition House (Mt. Vernon)** – a housing and re-entry program for those transitioning from jail or prison; previous residents often return to provide peer support to current program participants.

September 13, 2017

North Central WA Bright Spots (Okanagan, Chelan, Douglas counties):

- 10 Opportunity Community (Wenatchee)** – a community model to help reduce poverty. United Way of Chelan and Douglas counties sponsor the Opportunity Community model in Wenatchee. The model breaks down stereotypes and educates the community on the causes of poverty and the impact it has on people living in poverty. The model is designed to create a better community network to impact poverty work already happening.
- 11 Women’s Resource Center (Wenatchee)** – a housing resource in Wenatchee. They provide permanent supportive housing, transitional housing, homeless street outreach, and landlord tenant liaison programs. WRC transformed a transient hotel in downtown Wenatchee to a help with transitional housing for families and individuals for up to 24-months. WRC provides case management and other programming to those staying in the shelter.
- 12 The Independent Learning Center (Twisp)** – the Methow Valley School District’s alternative high school, provides students with an individualized, self-paced setting. It was highlighted as one example of a school-based model with proven success.



September 27, 2017

Spokane County Bright Spots:

- 13 Data Walk with Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners (Spokane)** – Located in the Spokane Valley, they provide over 100 units of affordable housing. In 2015, they moved their housing portfolio to a no smoking indoors policy and will be evaluating if there have been any health impacts for residents due to the change.

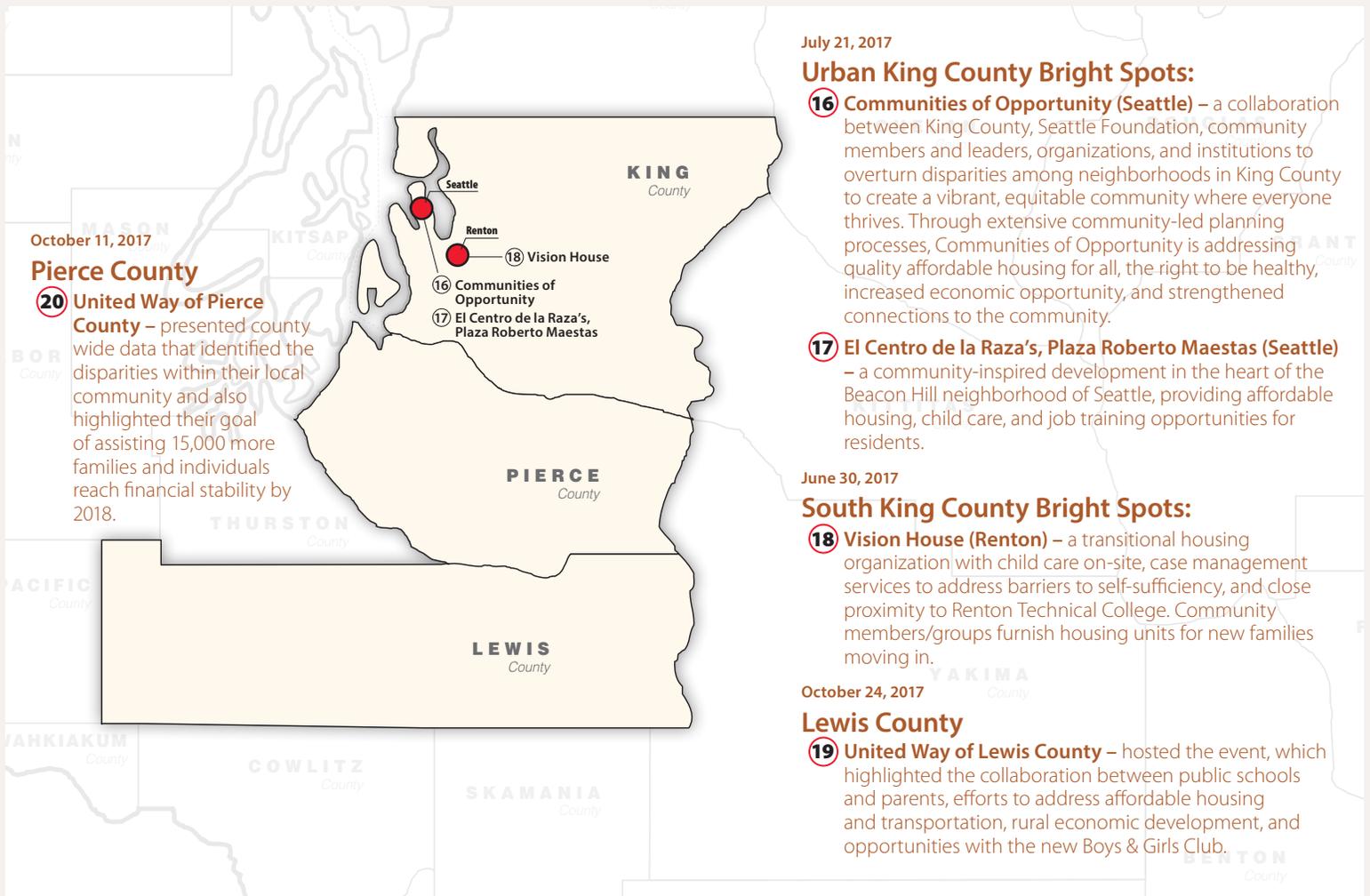


September 28, 2017

Tri-Cities Bright Spots (Benton and Franklin counties):

- 14 MLK Community Center & Community Garden (Pasco)** – The YMCA-affiliated Community Center after-school program works intentionally to serve whole families, with activities that include adult soccer programs. The adjacent community garden uses Master Gardener assistance to help residents in a nearby low-income housing complex grow “salsa gardens” - tomatoes, cucumbers, peppers and onions.
- 15 Communities in Schools (Richland)** – Communities in Schools funds site coordinators located in multiple schools in the Tri-Cities area that help children succeed in school by helping them and their families access help with academic assistance, basic needs, enrichment, life skills, and physical and mental health. In doing this, they work closely with the local CSO and other community organizations.





October 11, 2017

Pierce County

20 United Way of Pierce County – presented county wide data that identified the disparities within their local community and also highlighted their goal of assisting 15,000 more families and individuals reach financial stability by 2018.

July 21, 2017

Urban King County Bright Spots:

16 Communities of Opportunity (Seattle) – a collaboration between King County, Seattle Foundation, community members and leaders, organizations, and institutions to overturn disparities among neighborhoods in King County to create a vibrant, equitable community where everyone thrives. Through extensive community-led planning processes, Communities of Opportunity is addressing quality affordable housing for all, the right to be healthy, increased economic opportunity, and strengthened connections to the community.

17 El Centro de la Raza's, Plaza Roberto Maestas (Seattle) – a community-inspired development in the heart of the Beacon Hill neighborhood of Seattle, providing affordable housing, child care, and job training opportunities for residents.

June 30, 2017

South King County Bright Spots:

18 Vision House (Renton) – a transitional housing organization with child care on-site, case management services to address barriers to self-sufficiency, and close proximity to Renton Technical College. Community members/groups furnish housing units for new families moving in.

October 24, 2017

Lewis County

19 United Way of Lewis County – hosted the event, which highlighted the collaboration between public schools and parents, efforts to address affordable housing and transportation, rural economic development, and opportunities with the new Boys & Girls Club.

Looking Ahead

2018 Listening Sessions!

As we enter the New Year, we will be visiting with more communities and tribal nations. As we wrap up our sessions, we will be releasing a final report reflecting on what we learned and how we plan to incorporate the information into our policy, practice, and partnerships.

Contact Information

Please contact Lori Pflugst (lori.pflugst@dshs.wa.gov) if you have any questions, comments, or feedback.

Governor Inslee's Creation of the Workgroup on Poverty Reduction

We are excited to share that Governor Inslee issued a Directive on November 6, 2017 creating an Interagency Work Group on Poverty Reduction. The new workgroup – with representation from ten agencies and legislators – will be co-led by the Department of Social and Health Services, Employment Security Department, and Department of Commerce. The Governor has directed the workgroup to include the expertise of those most impacted by poverty in their efforts, as well as the expertise of other stakeholders, including those in academia, non-profits, philanthropy, and community-based organizations. The workgroup will deliver a 10-year strategic plan to reduce poverty, by September 1, 2018.

The learning from the Listening Forums will be shared with this new work group and help set the foundation for its work ahead. We will be reaching out to you in the New Year for ideas on how your organizations want to stay connected to the workgroup's activities.

