

# A Vital Bridge with the Community

*PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend*

## 2022-2025 Community Health Needs Assessment



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# Message from leadership:

**Strong. Resilient. Engaged. Courageous. These words define our Eugene-Springfield community.**

Our community is blessed with a strong infrastructure of educational institutions, social service organizations, health partners and local businesses. In times of crisis, our community comes together to build hope and resiliency of the very old and very young; low-income families and at-risk youth; Black, Indigenous and People of Color; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex; the disabled and the unhoused; and others. The dedicated leaders, staff and volunteers at each of our partner organizations have stepped up to ensure access to community services that are needed now more than ever: food, shelter, warm clothing and personal protective equipment.

In this time of uncertainty, the commitment of PeaceHealth and our partners has been and continues to be unwavering. The YMCA, KinderCare, First Baptist Church, United Way and so many others immediately responded to provide subsidized childcare, virtual learning and access to resources. Thank you for supporting our frontline healthcare and essential workers and their families so they could focus on doing what they do best: taking care of others.

This year has challenged us to rethink how to bring more dignity, respect and humility to our work. We are humbled by our community's response and realize, through all of this, there is even more work to be done. It is a process, a learning experience and an ongoing journey for which we are ready.

PeaceHealth is committed to confronting racism in healthcare. We will advocate for social and health justice to fulfill our PeaceHealth Mission of treating each person in a loving and caring way. We are honored to be a part of this work and stand beside our partners, those we serve and our community.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Todd Salnas'.

Todd Salnas  
Chief Executive-Oregon Network



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Susan Blane'.

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 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?

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.



## OUR KEY FINDINGS

**Social justice** consistently rose to the top of our community's stated priorities. We identified a critical call for **improved health equity** for Black, Indigenous and People of Color; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex; those living in rural and remote areas; and other vulnerable and at-risk members of our community.

Investment in **housing availability and affordability** for families is a key theme, as is the need for **support services** including childcare, access to healthy food and access to healthcare. **Investing in more community health workers**, peer support specialists, personal health navigators and other traditional health worker roles—and locating them in schools for families, children and adolescents—is also a priority in our community.

The assessment further identified the need for **access to mental healthcare and substance abuse prevention**, noting a concerning trend of worsening mental health among Lane County residents, especially youth.

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

## WHO WE ARE AND WHAT WE BELIEVE IN

Situated in the beautiful Willamette Valley along the McKenzie River in Springfield, Oregon, PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend serves as a vital bridge to our rapidly growing and increasingly diverse surrounding community.

That's why it is 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, White Bird, Volunteers in Medicine, free clinics and community-based service organizations.

PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend serves the local community as a comprehensive healthcare center and the vast surrounding communities of central and southern Oregon as a regional referral center for patients with acute care needs. With a focus on serving the needs of each individual patient from hospital care to recovery, we are committed to patient safety, transparency and continuous improvement.

As access to health insurance and affordable housing continues to be a challenge in the community, many patients lack a home to return to, family to care for them or sufficient financial resources for transitional care. With a focus on serving these members of our community, our RiverBend campus has built strong partnerships with other local organizations to provide a bridge as these patients transition from hospital care to recovery.



### About PeaceHealth Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend

**287.03**

Average daily census

**353**

Total licensed beds

**4.45**

Average length of stay (days)

**23,555**

Inpatient discharges

**454,859**

Outpatient clinic visits

**14,982**

Surgeries

**3,543**

Employees

**947**

Active medical staff

**2,391**

Births

**57,534**

Emergency Department visits

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

# 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 employees 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—3,543 of those throughout the Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend 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 staff.

Over the last two years, 637 employees in the Lane County area have received support with housing and utilities (51%), access to care or basic services like internet and transportation (31%) and food access (18%). This is just the beginning. In addition to providing care and resources, PeaceHealth continues to refine our hiring practices to encourage the growth of a diverse workforce. We are committed to implementing change reflective of 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.

**“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

## 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.



### A growing community...

#### SPRINGFIELD:

**64,078**

Population

#### LANE COUNTY:

**382,971**

Population

**7.87%**

2010-20 population growth

**10.57%**

2010-20 population growth

Source: World Population Review

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

% Race/Ethnicity Data of Population				
	Springfield	Lane County	Oregon	U.S.A.
White	80	81	75	60
Latinx	11	9	13	19
Multi-Racial	6	5	4	3
American Indian/ Alaska Native	2	2	2	1
Asian	2	3	5	6
Black/African American	1	1	2	13
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	1	0	1	1

Source: U.S. Census

## Poverty's expansive grip

Poverty rate by race in  
Springfield



**78%** Native Hawaiian/  
Pacific Islander



**40%** Black/African American



**23%** American Indian/  
Alaska Native



**20%** Latinx



**20%** White



**14%** Multiple Races



**10%** Asian

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

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.



# 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: racial and 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 our Lane County facilities. For example, while only 8% of patients identify as Latinx, the percentage of Latinx patients testing positive for COVID-19 was more than three times the rate at 26.5%. At Sacred Heart Medical Center at RiverBend, patients identifying as Latinx were also hospitalized at a higher rate than any other group and was disproportionate to the size of their population.

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 segments 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 Springfield and Lane County is rapidly growing; with this growth comes the need for more care, particularly in the areas of 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.

In order to meet growing care needs, it has never been more important for us to promote collaboration with our community partners while expanding community-based clinics, referral and care options, and alternative care practices.

### COVID-19's Disproportionate Impact

**8%**

of total patients identifying as Hispanic/Latinx

**26.5%**

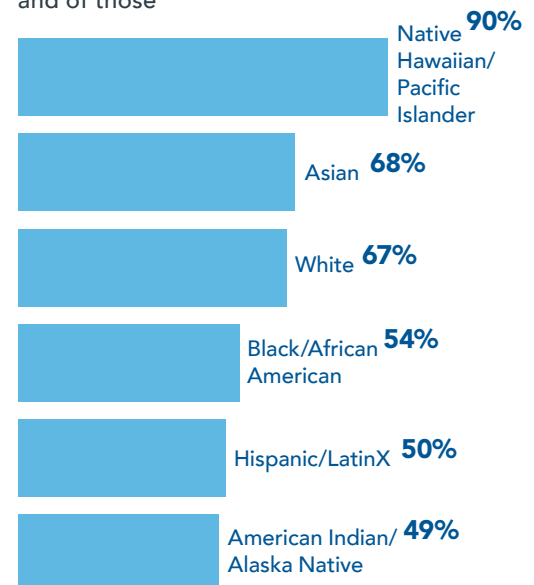
of patients testing positive for COVID-19 from Hispanic/Latinx population

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



**“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, consideration for health and childcare because they are dangerous sources of stress for our communities.”**

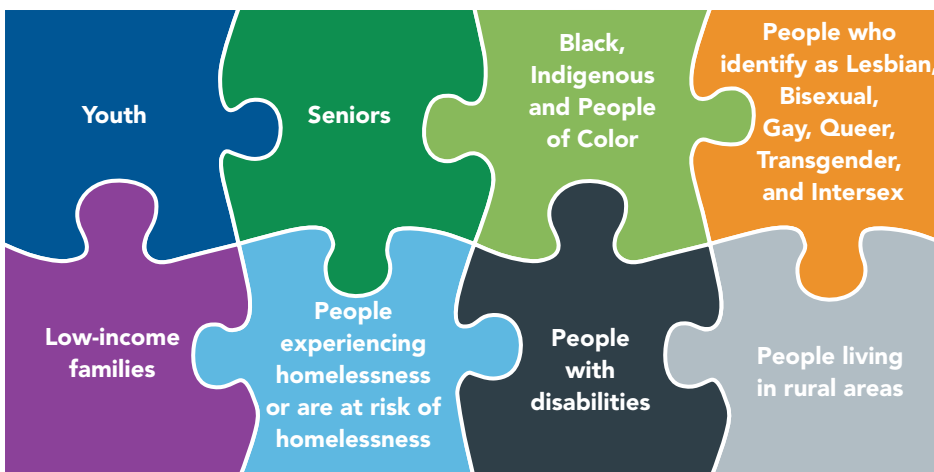
– Meghan McCarthy, System Director of Community Health, PeaceHealth

## 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. 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, engagement with community caregivers; and NOURISH: Address food insecurities to enhance family and child well-being

## BRIDGING THE GAP IN OUR COMMUNITY

Our priority is to provide the overall best care possible to our entire community. In order 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 safe path to recovery

## Pallet shelters for patients experiencing homelessness

Historically, the vacancy rate in Lane County for rentals has been incredibly low. As recently as 2019, 58% of the population rented versus owned, and in 2021, the county's vacancy rate had plunged to just more than 2%. Although the eviction moratorium from the pandemic has helped keep some families and individuals out of homelessness, this will soon be ending. Our communities will most likely see rent increases—and a new wave of homelessness and unsheltered living.

PeaceHealth directly invests in developing supportive, affordable, respite-specific, service-enriched housing in the community focused on preventing future homelessness. We take pride in ensuring that all of our housing investments include integrated social services, partnering with agencies and non-profit organizations, where possible, to holistically address community wellness and housing instability.

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

Heading into 2020, homeless numbers had been steadily rising in Lane County, including the Eugene-Springfield area. 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.

PeaceHealth felt the impact of trying to place patients experiencing homelessness into safe environments after leaving the hospital. We partnered with St. Vincent de Paul to address the need with a creative temporary housing solution, combining a safe place to stay with access to a continuum of care.

### Housing realities of Lane County

**58%**

of Lane County rents

**2.01%**

vacancy rate

Source: [Department of Numbers](#)

### KEY BENEFITS

- Provides safe, supported and monitored housing for patients recovering from illness and experiencing homelessness.
- Establishes a home base from which coordinated care can be implemented.
- Encourages patients experiencing homelessness to participate in other treatment and support programs.

## FLEXIBLE HOUSING TO PROMOTE FULL RECOVERY

Over the last year, PeaceHealth has invested in placing personal shelters near St. Vincent de Paul's Dawn to Dawn service site. These shelters are a safe place for patients experiencing homelessness who have recently been discharged from inpatient stays and Emergency Department visits. Here they can receive the coordination of care and services they need to fully recover. The Pallet Shelter program now has 11 units that can be flexed to house couples and single adults, helping to ensure a seamless transition of patients.

PeaceHealth's \$383K in funding covers St. Vincent de Paul's site preparation and construction costs for each of the 11 pallet shelter units provided by Lane County Department of Human Services; operational costs including utilities, garbage service, an accessible toilet and hand-washing station; and trained staff for 24/7 site supervision.

Just steps away is The Hub, a modular clinic operated by Willamette Family Inc. Health, Wellness and Recovery Services, providing physical and mental healthcare services for patients experiencing homelessness. To round out the full circle of care, St. Vincent de Paul provides healthy meals, hygiene and other support services. The site was able to transition 89 patients last year from hospital to recovery.

### Providing vital shelter

**\$383K**

PeaceHealth funding  
through June 2022

**89**

patients transitioned from  
hospital to recovery

**1,115**

nights of shelter,  
January–September 2021

Source: PeaceHealth



## HOME - Community priorities: Develop medical respite housing

The success of the St. Vincent de Paul Pallet Shelters has demonstrated the restorative impact of safe, supported housing on the recuperation journey. Yet gaps in care remain unaddressed in our community; individuals with complex healthcare needs who do not qualify for skilled nursing facility stays or home health nursing visits continue to fall through the cracks.

PeaceHealth looks forward to partnering with Occupy Medical and the Lane County Poverty and Homelessness Board to explore the development of a medical respite facility in our community. We envision an environment where higher levels of healthcare are provided in a supervised setting for those recuperating from illness while experiencing homelessness.

**“Being able to provide a continuum of services for vulnerable populations that are unhoused is a game-changer. Besides just providing a place, we have people on site with some medical skills and an ability to actually treat people. So I love this plan; it's a great partnership.”**

– Terry McDonald,  
Executive Director,  
St. Vincent de Paul





# Life-saving prevention

## Syringe exchange and naloxone kit distribution

Like much of the nation, Oregon is in the grips of an opioid crisis involving prescription pain medications, heroin and non-pharmaceutical fentanyl. Our state has one of the highest rates of prescription opioid misuse in the nation, resulting in abuse, overdose and death.

This crisis impacts every segment of our society: young and old, rich and poor, urban and rural. In service to our Mission, PeaceHealth is working in collaboration with community partners to halt the opioid epidemic by bringing healing to patients and families suffering from substance use disorder and chronic pain. In addition to targeting opioid and substance use dependency, our community health team targets overall behavioral health strategies to improve community wellness and health justice.

### THE COMMUNITY SPOKE—AND WE LISTENED

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

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought further hardship on members of our community struggling with addiction, now facing social isolation combined with a loss of resources and access to treatment programs. Sudden and dramatic increases in death rates have prompted alerts from community law enforcement and health officials.

Recent fatalities are atypical of demographics typically associated with death by overdose, with youth being at particular risk. There are also indicators that fatalities have been associated with online drug purchases and the unknowing ingestion of fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid that is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine.

### FIGHTING ADDICTION WITH EMPATHY, EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND EDUCATION

PeaceHealth stands strong with the many community organizations in Lane County dedicated to the prevention and treatment of drug addiction. A powerful example is PeaceHealth's partnership with HIV Alliance in Lane County to support the Syringe Exchange Program and distribution of naloxone kits in the community and from hospital emergency departments.

### The opioid crisis in our community and state

**19%**

of all deaths in Lane County are drug overdoses

**13%**

of all deaths in Oregon are drug overdoses

**5**

average number of opioid overdose deaths per week in Oregon

Source: [Oregon.gov](https://www.oregon.gov)

Naloxone has a remarkable impact, counteracting overdoses and reviving victims instantly. The program has been credited with saving hundreds of lives over the last three years. PeaceHealth's investment ensures the kits are free and available to both people at risk of overdose and their families.

Another aspect of this program is the opportunity to have positive interactions with at-risk community members and their families. These connections help build trusting and supportive relationships, opening the door to education and real change.

Over time, the goal is to lower opioid and other substance abuse, reduce the need for drug-related emergency room visits and improve the quality of life for impacted individuals and their families. The program is also a safe place for individuals at risk for HIV.



## HOPE - Community priorities: Increase access to care

Evidence-based interventions like the Syringe Exchange and naloxone kit programs that reduce infection rates and drug-related fatalities are pivotal in keeping our communities safe—but they alone do not address the roots of dependency. There is an urgent need in our community for increased access to mental health care and addiction treatment, particularly among vulnerable youth and young adult groups.

Community Benefit Organizations like 15th Night (providing services to youths experiencing homelessness) and Looking Glass (offering residential and outpatient treatment services to children, teens and young adults) provide partnership opportunities in addressing and preventing addiction to help ensure the future of our community.

### KEY BENEFITS

- Administration of naloxone immediately reverses the effects of a drug overdose and saves lives.
- The Syringe Exchange Program reduces the reuse of needles, preventing new HIV and hepatitis infections.
- Programs create opportunities for education and treatment of opioid addiction.

### HIV Alliance's Lane County Syringe Exchange Program by the numbers 2021

**7,043**

syringe exchange client encounters

**959,913**

sterile syringes distributed

**1,104,159**

used syringes collected and destroyed

**6,062**

naloxone doses delivered

**308**

reported overdose reversals

Source: [HIV Alliance](#)





# Holistic care for families

## Wraparound support services across the region

Preventative, holistic healthcare is happening in diverse settings throughout the community—and the demand is high. The impact of our work reaches deep into our communities as we engage people in their everyday lives, addressing social, economic and behavioral factors impacting their health.

This is especially true when patients leave our direct care, returning home to manage their own health. Our goal is to create supportive environments where patients can develop the skills and community relationships needed to manage their own health while preventing repeat emergency department or urgent care visits.

### **THE COMMUNITY SPOKE—AND WE LISTENED**

We continue to work with our partners to bridge the gap between outpatient care, social services and inpatient care for youths and seniors; Black, Indigenous and People of Color; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex; and others.

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. Some lost their housing. Finding new employment post-pandemic has created new challenges: not enough income to make up lost ground, but too much to qualify for many public assistance programs.

Safe housing, nutrition, education and emotional well-being are all important determinants of physical and behavioral health. When that foundation begins to crumble, the weight falls on social and health systems. Over the last two years, that infrastructure has been challenged to its core by the pandemic.

### **AN OASIS FOR THOSE IN NEED**

To help bridge the gap for these families in crisis, PeaceHealth found an ideal partner in Catholic Community Services and OASIS. The Catholic Community Services partnership provides safety net and support services to improve the resiliency of Latinx and Black, Indigenous and People of Color communities—at a time when other services in the community have been significantly reduced due to COVID-19.

OASIS, located at 1175 G St., is a collaborative project providing unhoused families and their children priority access to a coordinated set of services at multiple locations within Springfield's G Street neighborhood.

With investments of \$50,000 each in 2020 and 2021 by PeaceHealth, Catholic Community Services provides tiny homes at OASIS, as well as a food bank, clothing closet, immigration services and wraparound neighborhood support.

The participating organizations function as a campus, with all services situated within easy walking distance, including:

- Access to laundry, showers and restroom facilities
- Daily access to food
- Help finding affordable housing
- Help with employment searches
- Access to school and other community-based resources

The partnership with Catholic Community Services is a holistic solution for families, even ensuring support for traditional family holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas. Catholic Community Services also addresses the future needs of families, providing support in obtaining education and workforce training.

## IMPROVING INCLUSION IN CARE AND EDUCATION

Recognizing the importance of community-based integrated care, PeaceHealth also has grown a partnership with Oregon school-based health centers.

Serving as hubs in the community, school-based health centers are vital in promoting youth health and well-being, as well as providing support for local families. So when 4J school district approached PeaceHealth Medical Group in 2017 seeking sustainability for their student health center, with the help of Oregon School-Based Health Alliance, a partnership was born.

Responding quickly, the medical group executed an aggressive timeline to ensure physical and mental health services were available to students at the start of the 2017-18 school year. With the assistance of \$75,000 annually in PeaceHealth community benefit funding since then, thousands of students have had healthcare visits with dedicated nurse practitioners and mental health services provided by Lane County Public Health.

## KEY BENEFITS

- Support for Latinx and Black, Indigenous and People of Color members of the community impacted by COVID-19.
- Holistic support for families, from housing and food to traditional celebrations.
- Addresses future needs through education and workforce training.

**1.25MM+**

pounds of food received  
in 2020-21

**\$1.50MM+**

value of food

**12,338**

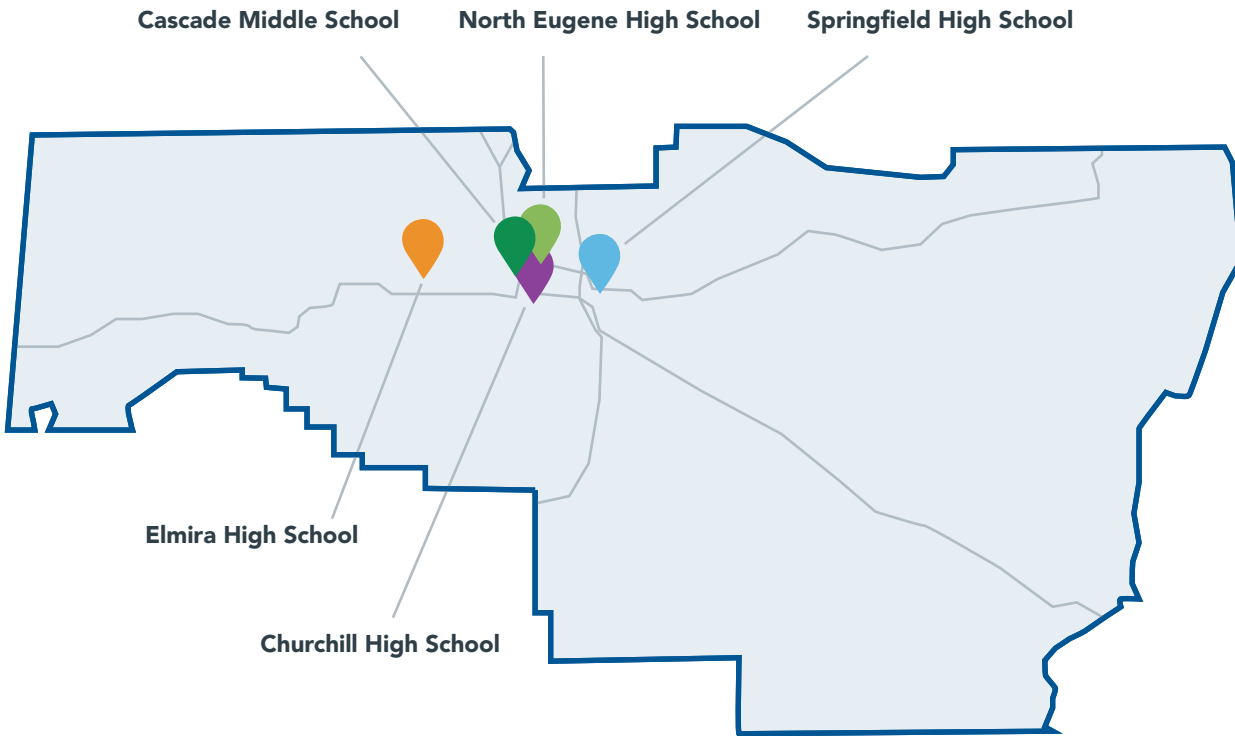
households served

**23,518**

individuals served

*Data represents activity for Eugene and Springfield programs combined*

As of October 2021, there are five Certified School-Based Health Centers in Lane County and 78 across Oregon. Because schools often serve as community hubs where families connect with one another, the more we can increase these partnerships and build upon school foundations, the more we can provide access and maximize growth in these communities. Co-location of services around schools is vital.



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

When it comes to building a bridge between healthcare and social supports, one size does not fit all. Our community is blessed with strong traditional health worker leadership focused on developing and funding programs that are bilingual, multicultural and 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 through advocacy and empowering individuals to achieve their healthcare goals—living their lives in the community and in their homes, outside of traditional healthcare settings.





# Feeding rural and remote areas

**More than 8 million pounds of food delivered**

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 regardless of 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. 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 a food environment: 1) limited access to healthy foods, and 2) food insecurity.

## PROMOTING ACCESS TO HEALTHY AND CULTURALLY SENSITIVE FOODS

Lane County falls within the average national ranking for a positive food environment (the average nationally is between 6.9 to 8.2). Yet a significant portion of our community still has challenges with food insecurity and has limited access to food.

There is strong evidence that food deserts—where access to food is limited—are correlated with a high prevalence of obesity and premature death. Healthy and culturally sensitive food access is critical for maintaining vitality and long-term positive outcomes in our communities.

## Lane County Food Access

**7.5/10**

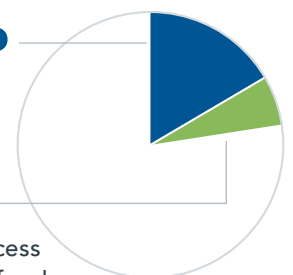
Food Environment Index  
in Lane County

**14%**

Food  
insecurity

**6%**

Limited access  
to healthy foods



Source: [County Health Rankings](#)

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 vulnerable members of our community to have access to healthy and culturally sensitive foods.

Through \$25,000 in community benefit funding from PeaceHealth, Food For Lane County was able to waive food transportation costs for 34 food banks throughout Lane County for a year, ensuring that rural and remote food banks were able to continue operations. To date, Food For Lane County has delivered more than 8.2 million pounds of food—enough for more than 8 million meals. With COVID-19's impact leading to empty store shelves and a lack of school breakfast and lunch programs due to remote learning, the work of Food For Lane County has been more important than ever.

### FILLING PLATES WITH MORE THAN EMPTY CALORIES

Nutrition is a fundamental component of health. At Food For Lane County, 58% of the food they've distributed meets nutritional standards in the Choosing Healthy Options Program (CHOP). Since the 2013-14 fiscal year, Food For Lane County has measured the quality of distributed food by those standards.

### Ensuring nourishment across Lane County

**8.2MM+**

pounds of food delivered

**72%**

went to emergency food  
box agencies

*Source: Food For Lane County*



## NOURISH—Community priorities: Expanding food partnerships

Imagine a food security system in our community where healthy, nutritious foods are offered as an integrated part of healthcare. Innovative programs that combine healthcare coverage, healthcare delivery and food security are happening in our community right now; they will only continue to grow in the years to come as the link between good health and healthy nutrition gains increased recognition.

Partnerships between PeaceHealth, Coordinated Care Organizations, School Garden Project of Lane County, Centro Latino Americano, Huerto de la Familia, and multiple food pantries and farmers markets across Lane County have been central to this work.

Together, we've produced community gardens, school gardens, Veggie RX programs, Double Up food bucks and free produce pickup 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 anticipated in 2020-21, thanks to the response from federal and local governments and generosity in the private sector. But the future is still uncertain for many families. We must continue to help them.

### KEY BENEFITS

- Ensure survival of rural and remote food banks and their ability to serve their communities.
- Ensure healthy nutrition for families at a time when school breakfast and lunch programs were unavailable.
- Support community food delivery when grocery stores were emptied of household and food staples.

# Final thoughts

## For times ahead

Our Community Health Needs Assessment process holds us accountable to listening and learning from our communities. PeaceHealth recognizes that our work is far from over. The needs are forever evolving—and so are we.

We are humbled and honored 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.**