

SORS Newsletter – April

Southern Oregon Success (SORS) is a collection of organizations committed to the success of the children, youth, and families of Jackson and Josephine Counties, from preconception to age

24. Learn more at <http://www.southernoregonsuccess.org>.



Welcome!

This is the monthly newsletter of Southern Oregon Success (SORS). We weave together the talent, expertise, and resources of the entire community to promote the health, academic, and life success of our children, youth, and families.

SORS envisions a community in which all our families provide stable and nurturing homes for our children; all children are ready for kindergarten; and all youth are succeeding in school, transitioning successfully to meaningful adult lives, and contributing to a thriving economy.

Contributions in the form of stories or story ideas, photos and graphics are welcome and encouraged. To find out more about SORS or to contribute to this newsletter, please contact Seth Kaplan at Seth_Kaplan@SouthernOREgonSuccess.org.

Community-School Partnership In Josephine County

It all started with tracking best practices and linking the data, or maybe more accurately, it started with wanting to make a difference and finding the means to do so. In either case, adapting a system pioneered by the Bethel School District, Grants Pass School District, as explained by Superintendent John Higgins, developed the capacity to track student achievement across academic, attendance, and behavioral outcomes. The result of this analysis was to better understand the relationship between these factors and the individual student experiences these records reflected. The data was initially reviewed for 171 high school dropouts Grants Pass High had in the spring of 2015.



“Some of these students had been in and out of schools across the region, state, and beyond – never getting to land anywhere,”

John learned. “But many were students from Grants Pass including some who had experienced some form of abuse, neglect or abandonment which alerted us to a link between such experiences and the educational outcomes for these students. “We could see a direct relationship between personal incidents, attendance, and academic struggles. We could basically identify the moment when the student began to spiral down, and it became really clear that we can’t wait until senior year to get a student back on track.”

Subsequent efforts by Higgins’ administrative team showed that intervention for these students must not only take place earlier, it has to be based on establishing a positive relationship with students and families. “If you want to reach out to someone who is struggling to succeed,” John notes, “you can’t do it by form letter. It needs to be person to person.”

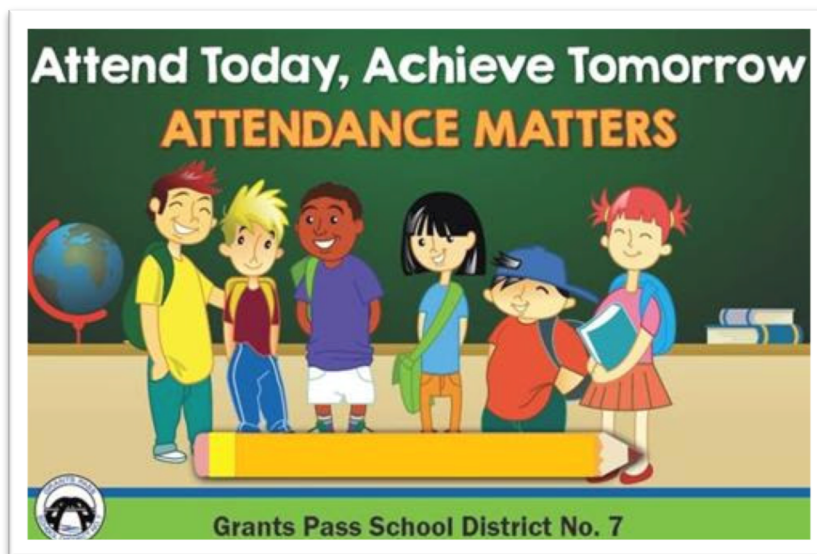
The information gleaned from the data and follow up conversations with these students led the team to understand that keys to success lay within stronger community partnerships and better parent engagement. All of this was taken to an administrative retreat last summer, which led to two new and compatible initiatives to improve student outcomes.

The first initiative organized by Grants Pass High School administration was to reach out to students entering high school to ensure that they have the supports they need to reach the high school finish line. Twenty outreach teams comprised of teachers, coaches and administrators visited with incoming freshman and their families at home to deliver a high school welcome packet, a friendly face, and helpful advice.

The second initiative was to organize the Josephine County Community Network (JCCN), led by the District Leadership team and, in particular Todd Bloomquist, Director of Special Services. JCCN is the realization that a student's success in school often depends on things beyond a school's traditional role. As John puts, "It's about minimizing bureaucracy, red tape, and over governance barriers, and addressing the human issue before us."

The District is focused on getting a student back into school, so they have a chance to succeed. And, according to John, "what's most needed to make that happen may be to get a family into housing, or to get them food. We can't address the educational need until these other needs are addressed and we need a lot of community partners around the table to help us. We know we can't do this alone, and we are seeing so much new energy by leveraging resources and finding commonality across the different agencies that care about the wellbeing of Josephine County

children and families."



Looking back on a year of discovery, John shares, "We are a lifeline for so many young people. We need to be a safe place, with caring, responsible adults for every child. We have learned that our traditional form of discipline is often ineffective – that punishing a child for a behavioral issue is not as effective as providing for their

basic needs whether it be housing, food or counseling support. We realized the need to move upstream in the process which has lead us to our current efforts to better understand the impact of adverse childhood experiences and the role of trauma informed educational practices. "

For John, trauma informed practice translates into seeing behaviors like hiding under a table or biting a teacher as indications of a larger issue outside of school. "Just being recognized as needing compassion in moments like this can be a very powerful experience for a student."

Todd Bloomquist has been at the forefront of these efforts for the District, including trainings for school personnel and organizing a recent community talk with Dr. Christopher Blodgett (see story in this issue). “Developing trauma informed educational practices is a strategic priority for the District,” John says, “and it is being supported by many of our community partners including several local CCO’s which are funding a Community Health Worker at an elementary school in both Josephine County school districts. This new and exciting position will serve as a system navigator for students and their families.”

As John prepares to retire at the end of this school year, he is excited about the direction the district is taking. “We have schools in every neighborhood. We can and should be a great community resource.”

“We see this work directly related to SORS,” John offers. “Much of this was presented at the SORS Key Leaders meeting last October and has grown from there.”

Community Voices from Academia Latina

This month’s Community Voices are from two students in Academia Latina, a Southern Oregon University program that immerses Latino youth in a university experience and supports their academic success.

“Students must have initiative; they should not be mere imitators. They must learn to think and act for themselves - and be free” - Cesar Chavez

Piedad Gonzalez –Diaz
Grants Pass High School

Being a Mexican female in a society which looks down upon Latinos is not an easy



task. We are constantly forced to defend our race because we are stereotyped and judged before we are even given a chance to prove ourselves. By society's view I am the incompetent weaker sex, an uneducated immigrant, a dropout, a little girl with a dream much too big, a *Mexicana*. I will be the first in my family, not only to attend college, but to graduate high school. By accepting that challenge, I have been placed in a position as a leader and a role model for my siblings, my family, younger generations, females, and minorities. That is an immense pressure to carry upon one's shoulders, but I have not gone through this journey alone. It was programs like Academia Latina Leadership that has inspired me to continue to pursue my dreams relentlessly not only for myself but for the sake of future generations.

I applied for the Leadership course because I wanted to further develop myself as a leader in my Latino community, but it was more than simply teaching me how to give orders. Through the courses provided by this camp, I was brought down to my roots. I had not realized how essential it was to understand myself before taking on the role as a leader. Academia Latina Leadership has helped me develop a sense of identity. In order to lead I had to first discover where I stood, what I believed in, and what I knew to be right. I was always the one to put up a brave face in my family for the sake of my siblings, but these courses tore me down, they brought me to tears, they unearthed my raw passion, the anger, the stress I had been holding back for so long. There was a transformation I cannot easily describe. By coming together with other students with similar life adversities, we created an everlasting bond with one another. We developed not only ourselves as leaders, but we learned the true meaning of teamwork. Programs like Academia Latina leadership are vital, they inspire students to defy stereotypes and break the chain.

Ever since I was a child I dreamed of being able to help others, to relieve people of the burdens their life adversities had caused them. Academia Latina Leadership has taught me more than I could possibly pick up from a textbook, they promote respect, responsibility, hard work, growth, and enrich the lives of the students with values by allowing us the opportunity to positively impact the lives of others. They have motivated us to take a stand for ourselves and our race, to teach younger Latino generations that their race is not a setback but instead something that should always be carried with pride; something that should be passionately embraced because it makes us unique. Although I have faced discrimination and racism, I love my Mexican heritage and I feel obligated to help and lead kids like me to realize their potential and not fall into society's discriminatory stereotypes. Academia Latina has helped me develop myself as a leader and motivated me to become a worthy role model, to disprove those who doubt.



Estrella Medrano
North Medford HS
12th Grade

Ever since I was little I always stayed in my comfort zone. Even though I was aware of how unbeneficial it was for me, it was difficult for me to socialize and try new things. Ever since my sister participated in Academia Latina I have always wanted to be a part of it as well. When my time came to apply, I was

quite nervous but knew this would be a great opportunity for me. To my surprise, this program actually did create new opportunities for me. I began to build new friendships and live an independent life away from my family. Since I have been a part of the Leadership group my last two years in Academia Latina, I began to gain knowledge in becoming a leader. As I will now be applying to become a junior counselor I am now aware of the ability I have to be a great role model and leader for the younger students. If it wasn't for The Leadership Group, I would have never thought about continuing on to become a junior counselor.

I can easily admit that the Leadership Group has impacted my life. Not only did I build new friendships but we also became part of a whole new family. I was very surprised on how fast I was able to trust my leadership group and how comfortable we all were with each other. This week was full of excitement, knowledge, emotions, and confidence building. Not only did these classes help build my knowledge and abilities, but my leadership members also helped me gain confidence in myself. Throughout my three years participating in Academia Latina, I can confidently say that this program has helped me meet my goals in life. As I have continued to struggle choosing a career I would like to pursue, I never imagined Academia Latina helping me in this decision. Since the Leadership Group was given the opportunity to volunteer at Northwest Seasonal Workers Association, I decided on volunteering there for my senior project. This was because I loved what this association did, they provided family members in the community with financial help as well as legal and medical help. To my luck I was given the chance to teach free English classes to community members as well. Through this experience I have decided to become an elementary school teacher.

Since I have benefited throughout the program I plan on continuing and helping others benefit as well. For this reason, I believe this program is a great opportunity for the youth. Not only will they build friendships but also get inspired to continue their education after High School. Due to their experience at Southern Oregon University, including the dorms, cafeteria, and actual professors from the university, they will be able to experience life as a college student. As I have said before, Academia Latina opens up many opportunities for students, and continues to motivate them to reach their goals and succeed in life. I know I can personally say, it has done so for me.

Collaborations at Work in SORS Community

Our region has a strong track record of collaborating to help our kids, families and communities thrive. But too many kids and families continue to struggle. Southern Oregon Success is taking on the task of bringing our collaborations to a higher level, to have a greater impact, and give every kid in Jackson and Josephine counties the chance to succeed. Here's an update on the ongoing efforts:

Self-Healing Communities/Trauma-Informed Approach

Local school districts, health care and social service providers and public safety agencies are putting practices into place with the trauma-informed approach developed from the ACEs Study (Adverse Childhood Experiences). The data from the ACEs Study stretches back over two decades, providing clear evidence on how experience impacts brain development, particularly the experience of significant trauma.

Two great websites to learn more about ACEs are acestoohigh.com and ACEsConnection.com.

One of the key components of SORS' work is support for the expansion of the trauma-informed approach across sectors. Two of our local Coordinated Care Organizations, AllCare and Jackson Care Connect, initiated an ACEs regional assessment in December to develop a "self healing community" strategy for Jackson and Josephine counties.



As part of the strategy, a team from our region recently attended a two-day master training program in Pendleton, led by Dr. Robert Anda, one of the co-authors of the ACEs Study, and Laura Porter, who is the co-founder with Dr. Anda of ACE Interface, the national leader in providing education, analysis, process design, and facilitation to help engage and motivate to prevent ACEs and improve well-being. You can learn more about their work at <http://www.aceinterface.com/index.html>.

Our local contingent, the Southern Oregon Self-Healing Community Team, is led by Bob Lieberman, CEO of Kairos, and the members include:

- Dr. Michelle Homer Anderson, Health Services Director for Southern Oregon Head Start
- Dr. Todd Bloomquist, Director of Special Services for Grants Pass School District #7
- Peter Buckley, Co-Project Manager for Southern Oregon Success
- Tamara Falls, Regional Manager-Community Liaison for Advantage Dental
- Taylor Kohn, MA, LPC, DHS Intensive Case Consultant
- Rick Rawlins, LCSW, Clinical Operations Manager for Jackson County Mental Health

Team members will be doing presentations on ACEs and the trauma-informed approach to family life, education, health care, social services, public safety and workforce development organizations throughout the region over the coming year. In addition, Laura Porter will be in our area on a regular basis for events to engage parents and the larger community, as well as training sessions for mid-level managers.

Stay tuned! We'll update the work and the schedules of the Self-Healing Community Team in each future SORS newsletter. We'll also provide information on the ACEs work being developed in the Phoenix-Talent School District and the Jackson County court system.

Jackson County Cross-System Work Group

The Jackson County Cross-System Work Group includes a number of agencies who serve families in need. Their collaborations include:

—Crossover Youth: working with youth involved with Juvenile Justice Services, Department of Human Services and Mental Health.

—Wraparound: working with youth and families involved in multiple systems, specifically Mental Health, Substance Abuse, DHS, Juvenile Justice, Developmental Disabilities, and our local schools in support of students with an Individual Education Plan. A very significant new development is the creation of a Review Committee to accept referrals for a collaborative care plan for local students in need. We'll include more information on the Review Committee's work in next month's newsletter.

—Suicide Prevention Coalition for Jackson County: meets the 2nd Tuesday of each month from 3 p.m. to 5 p.m. The Coalition does outreach to school districts, churches and other community partners, offering various levels of training and support.

For more information on any of the Cross System Work Group programs, contact Amy Buehler at BuehleAA@jacksoncounty.org



Josephine County Community Network

The Grants Pass School District is leading the development of the Josephine County Community Network (JCCN), a county-wide collaboration to bring services to families and kids (see earlier story). The JCCN includes a website reporting system to receive referrals from anyone in the community, and working with Options, the county's mental health program, to coordinate a care plan. The JCCN is central to the Grants

Pass School District's work to reduce absenteeism and helping every student succeed. You can access this site at <https://sites.google.com/site/jocountynetwork>.

In addition, the school district has taken a leading role in advancing the trauma-informed approach to services in Josephine County, and recently invited Dr. Christopher Blodgett from Washington State University, a leading researcher on the effects of trauma, to present an overview to the community. Over 250 people attended the presentation, helping to raise awareness and move the overall collaboration in the county forward.

For more information on the Josephine County Community Network, contact Todd Bloomquist at tbloomquist@grantspass.k12.or.us

Again, stay tuned!

SORS Youth Development Survey Calls for School – Community Partnerships

SORS recently conducted a survey of Youth Development providers in Jackson and Josephine Counties, which indicated a strong desire to collaborate with schools and districts. Asked what priority respondents would place on eight potential topics, 100% identified Community/School Connections as the highest priority. Topic priorities in order of importance to respondents are:

- 1. Community/School Connections:**
- 2. Identifying System Barriers**
- 3. Trauma Informed Care (ACES)**
- 4. Wrap-around Services**
- 5. Identifying Gaps Between Needs and Services**
- 6. Disconnected Youth**
- 7. Surfacing Funding Barriers**
- 8. Warm Hand-Offs Across Systems**



The only topic to be identified as a high priority by less than 50% of respondents was “Warm Hand-Offs Across Systems,” although one respondent may have been speaking for others by expressing uncertainty about what that means. Warm hand-off refers to ensuring that when a person leaves a program for reasons other than no longer needing services (e.g., aging out, timing out, or losing eligibility) the releasing agency makes a formal connection to someone who can continue to provide supports. Examples of this might include formal “hand offs” from early learning to kindergarten (aging out) or from a juvenile justice program to external youth development (eligibility).

Another clear message from respondents is that they are interested in meeting to solve common issues together, with 93% strongly agreeing to the statement that Southern Oregon youth-serving organizations will benefit from collective effort and 94% of respondents agreeing that youth-serving organizations need to establish a common agenda. And, while responses were somewhat mixed on whether nonprofit agencies will only attend meetings where funding is involved (36% agree/64% disagree), 93% disagreed with the statement that they would only attend a meeting if funding is involved.

Most respondents indicated a willingness to participate in focused, action-oriented meetings with clear agendas. A preference was indicated for monthly, afternoon meetings, no longer than two hours.

SORS will be hosting a Community/School Connections session to identify and address issues and best practices in the coming weeks. All survey respondents will be invited. Others should contact Seth Kaplan (seth_kaplan@southernoregonsuccess.org) or Peter Buckley (peter@southernoregonsuccess.org) if they want to participate.

HCCSO and JRHA Partner in Support of SORS

Health Care Coalition of Southern Oregon (HCCSO) and Jefferson Regional Health Alliance (JRHA) have coordinated in a funding strategy which provides \$30,000 in support of the SORS Program Manager positions and collective impact training.

The mission of Health Care Coalition of Southern Oregon is to advance health equity through key partnerships with public health agencies, community health centers and other community organizations. Jefferson Regional Health Alliance is a collaboration of regional community leaders from all sectors acting in a leadership role to improve the health and health care resources of southern Oregonians. Both organizations recognize and support the key role education plays in advancing health and health equity, and are working together to deepen relationships between the health and education sectors to build a healthier community.

The current SORS budget is \$298,700 which has been revised to recognize significant in-kind support from Southern Oregon Education Service District (SOESD) and other key partners. The new contributions bring SORS revenue to \$180,700 for this year.



The addition of two staff is enabling SORS to embark in new directions within a Collective Impact framework, including Self-Healing Communities/Trauma Informed Approaches, Community-School Partnerships, Cross-Sector Support, and Continuous Communication. With the support of full-time professional staffing, we will engage with partners across sectors at deeper levels, strengthen and formalize our governance structure, work across systems to meet the needs of children and their families, and use and share data to learn what is and isn't working.

If you have ideas about how SORS can better support your work and the needs of children, youth, and families in Jackson and Josephine Counties, please let us know. If you can support SORS with a contribution, we would love to hear from you. Please contact Peter Buckley at Peter_Buckley@SouthernOREgonSuccess.org or Seth Kaplan at Seth_Kaplan@SouthernOREgonSuccess.org.

211info: Filling Needs and Finding Gaps

One of the most important steps to improving the quality of life in a community is to understand what the people who live there need. While the primary intention of 211info is to guide people to the health and social services they need, it also provides an invaluable service to policy makers and providers by tracking the resources people seek and the gaps which are not being met.



211 is a nation-wide program operating independently in each state. 211info, serving Oregon and Southwest Washington, allows service providers to complete an online form indicating the services they provide, as well as intake procedures and eligibility requirements. 211info staff are trained to use this information to help residents receive “compassion, empathy, and advice” to support them in trying times.

According to Carrie Prechtel, Community Engagement Coordinator for Jackson and Josephine Counties, over 400,000 queries are made into 211info statewide through the web, phone, and text each year. A new 211info mobile app is likely to make contact easier and more accessible.

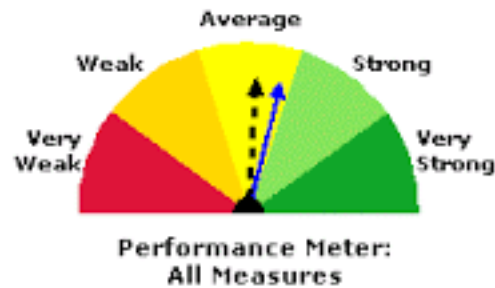
Every month, 100-200 people in Jackson County and 30-60 people in Josephine County contact 211info. In Jackson County contacts tend to come from younger people (20-39). Contacts tend to be older in Josephine County (60+). In both counties, the vast majority of contacts come from white women, living in poverty in the urban center. The most common needs in Jackson County are 1) housing, including rental, subsidized housing, and shelter; 2) food, including SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) and emergency food; and 3) utility assistance. The greatest gaps in the last quarter were 1) shelter, 2) transportation assistance, and 3) rent assistance. In Josephine County, requests came in for 1) utility cost assistance, 2) shelter/housing, and 3) SNAP/emergency food. The biggest gap was in shelter.

211info is commonly thought of as the organization you contact when you are in urgent need of help, but the organization has increasingly taken on a case management role with advisers providing more extensive support in the categories of parenting, SNAP assistance, housing and shelter, and a new 24/7 foster parent support line coming soon. Childcare referrals are being

added in July. 211info also runs seasonal programs such as winter weather updates, holiday baskets, and referrals for breathing masks during fire season.

For more information, contact Carrie Prectel at Carrie.Prectel@211info.org.

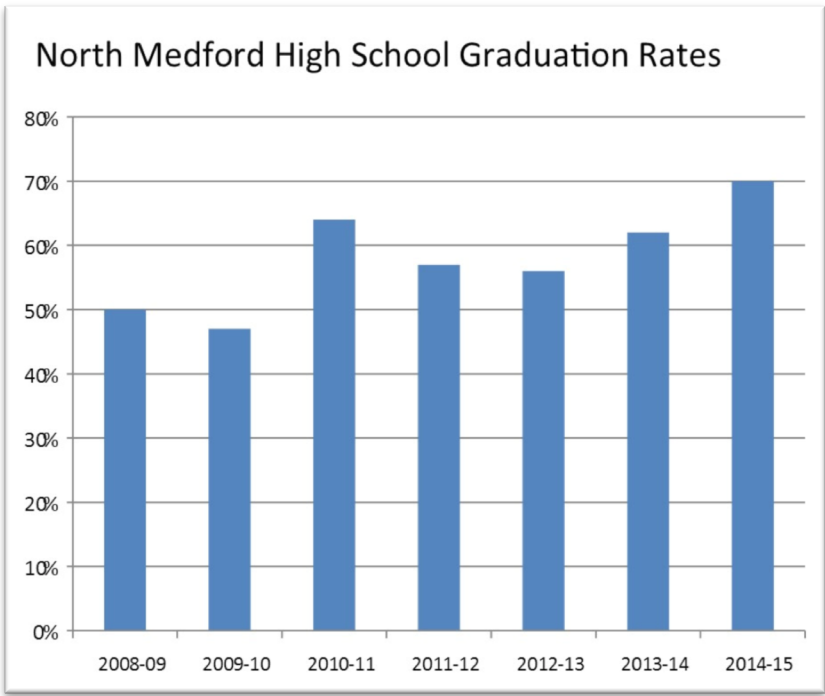
Moving the Dial on Key Indicators



A research brief from the Oregon Department of Education praises North Medford High School for its efforts to increase the percentage of Limited English Proficient students and English Learners graduating.

According to the report: North Medford raised the graduation rate for its Limited English Proficient students by 8 percentage points from 2013-14 and by 20 percentage points since

2008-09. Perhaps more importantly, a growing share of English Learners (EL) are becoming proficient in English prior to entering high school and those students are graduating at even higher rates: 97% in 2014-15. That success may be the result of North Medford working closely with its primary feeder school—Hedrick Middle School—to better prepare students for the transition to high school. North Medford



connects with Hispanic students and promotes a college-going culture in multiple ways: Heritage

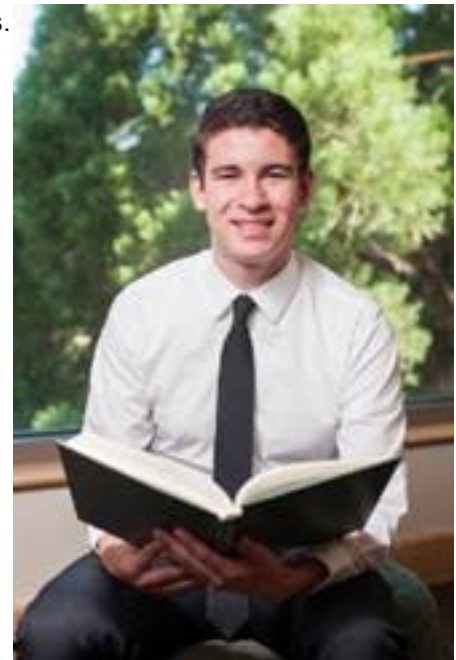
Spanish classes where Spanish-speaking students can earn college credit, parent outreach for the families of EL students, parent nights where parents play an integral role in planning the meetings, and field trips to nearby community colleges and universities to introduce students to college culture. Many of these activities are led by Cesar Flores, a graduate of nearby Phoenix High, who now works at North Medford and was the first in his family to graduate from college.

Newsletter Briefs

Time Running Out on Southern Oregon Latino Scholarship Fund!

An anonymous donor has pledged to match up to \$30,000 this month only toward the Southern Oregon Latino Scholarship Fund. In March, \$8,125 was raised and \$3,890 was raised in the first week of April. Here is a story from recent scholarship recipient, Luis:

Growing up I lived in a neighborhood filled with drugs and gangs. There have never been many positive role models to look up to there. Many of my peers fell into the influences that surrounded us and that left me alone following the educational path I'm pursuing. Also, during the recession my dad lost his job of many years and that left my family and me struggling to stay on our feet. During this time my parents were too stressed and worried about trying to keep our family financially stable that they couldn't help me in school as much as they wanted too. Also, both of my parents have uncompleted education and little knowledge of English, and it was hard for them to get a good paying job and help me. They have always supported me as best they can in anything I want to do, and now I am going to attend the University of Oregon this fall. There I plan to get a degree in business administration with a concentration in marketing. With my degree I plan to go work at a corporate company, more specifically one that youth look up to. There I plan to help push positive messages through marketing and media. Then after gathering corporate experience, I want to use what I learn to open my own marketing firm for non-profit organizations to let people know that there are businesses that are willing to help struggling people and families.



To donate and help others like Luis, please visit:

<http://www.solsf.org/donate.html>

OR

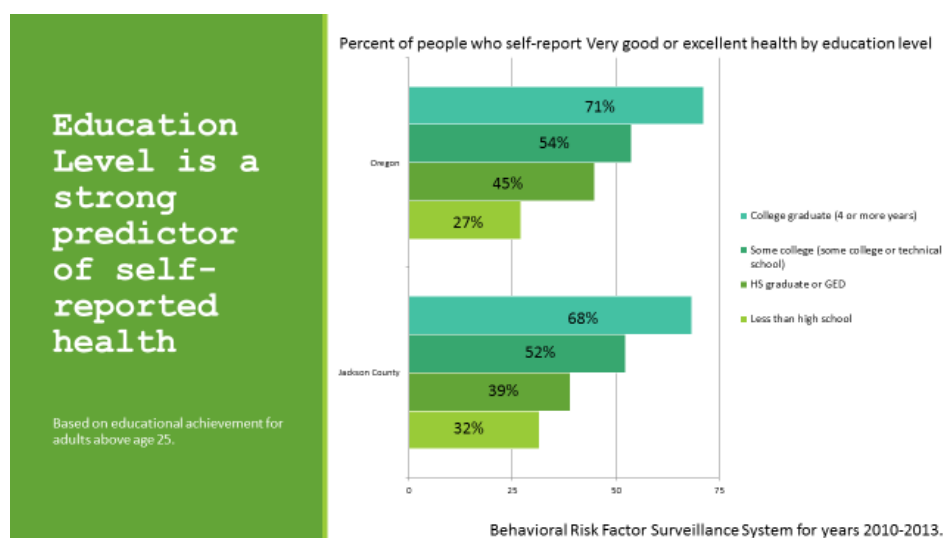
<https://www.razoo.com/us/story/Southern-Oregon-Latino-Scholarship-Fund-2016>

Reach Higher Oregon

The Oregon Department of Education (ODE), in conjunction with other State agencies, is hosting "Reach Higher Oregon: Mobilizing Career and College Advising Supports for All Students" at Central Oregon Community College in Bend July 19-20, 2016. The event will inform school administrators, school counselors, student advisers, and college access professionals about new resources to help students with high school graduation and post-secondary success. New information on what Regional Achievement Collaboratives (RACs) are doing to help young people graduate and move on to post-secondary success will also be provided. The event is free and low-cost accommodations are available. For more information, refer to the website <http://goo.gl/forms/NVzhMh0pLG> or contact Jennell Ives at jennell.ives@or.us.

Education = Health

A recent report from the SO Health-E - Southern Oregon Health Equity Coalition highlighted the strong connection between educational attainment and key social determinants of health, including income. This graphic highlights the relationship between education and health in Oregon and Jackson County. As can be seen, college graduates report very good or excellent health at more than twice the rate of individuals with less than a high school degree.



Thanks to Our Volunteer Leadership!

SORS is led by volunteer leadership who demonstrate their commitment to the children, youth, and families of Jackson and Josephine Counties on a daily basis, making time to step beyond their individual organizational agendas to work towards collective impact. Our volunteer leadership drives the SORS' agenda and rolls up their sleeves to do whatever's needed to move things forward. Many of our leaders have been engaged in moving this effort forward since 2011, and we are grateful for their continuing support!

Stewardship Committee: Provides guidance to staff, provides backbone support to the collective effort, and collaboratively develops the strategic and tactical agenda.

Jim Fong, Executive Director, Rogue Workforce Partnership

Kathy Bryon, Executive Director, Gordon Elwood Foundation

Scott Beveridge, Superintendent, Southern Oregon Education Service District

Steering Committee: Collaboratively develops and guides the strategic and tactical direction of SORS.

Amy Buehler, Children's Area Manager, Jackson County Mental Health

Angela Warren, Collaboration Manager, Jefferson Regional Health Alliance

Bob Lieberman, Chief Executive Officer, Kairos

Debbie Ameen, Director of Strategy, All Care

Heidi Hill, Community Engagement Program Manager, Jackson Care Connect

Jennifer Johnstun, Director of Health Strategy, Primary Health

Jim Fong, Executive Director, Rogue Workforce Partnership

John Higgins, Superintendent, Grants Pass School District

Kathy Bryon, Executive Director, Gordon Elwood Foundation

Maggie Sullivan, Executive Director, Health Care Coalition of Southern Oregon

Mary Ferrell, Executive Director, Maslow Project

Mary-Curtis Gramley, Director, Southern Oregon Early Learning Hub

Rita Sullivan, Executive Director, OnTrack

Scott Beveridge, Superintendent, Southern Oregon Education Service District

Steve Thorpe, Faculty, Southern Oregon University

Our mailing address is:

SORS
101 Grape Street
Medford, Oregon 97901

Email: Seth_Kaplan@southernoregonsuccess.org

Phone: 541.858.6732