

# Regional leaders discuss health objectives of county

By ERIN HAWKINS  
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SEQUIM — Regional leaders from across Clallam County dug into data that shows a high percentage of food insecurity during a food forum.

The Olympic Peninsula Healthy Community Coalition invited policy makers, School Board members, health professionals and educators to the forum at the Guy Cole Center in Sequim on Wednesday.

In July, Clallam County Health and Human services released the data from the 2017 Community Health Assessment that aimed to identify key health needs and issues through a comprehensive data collection and analysis process.

"We got some really interesting data that came out of it," said Monica Dixon, coalition board president, 2017 health assessment committee member and forum facilitator.

"One was that we have 37 percent of 10th-graders feeling hopelessness and 66 percent of youth say that they have limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables."

Dixon said the forum was a way to start engaging regional leaders in a discussion of health while data from the survey was still fresh.

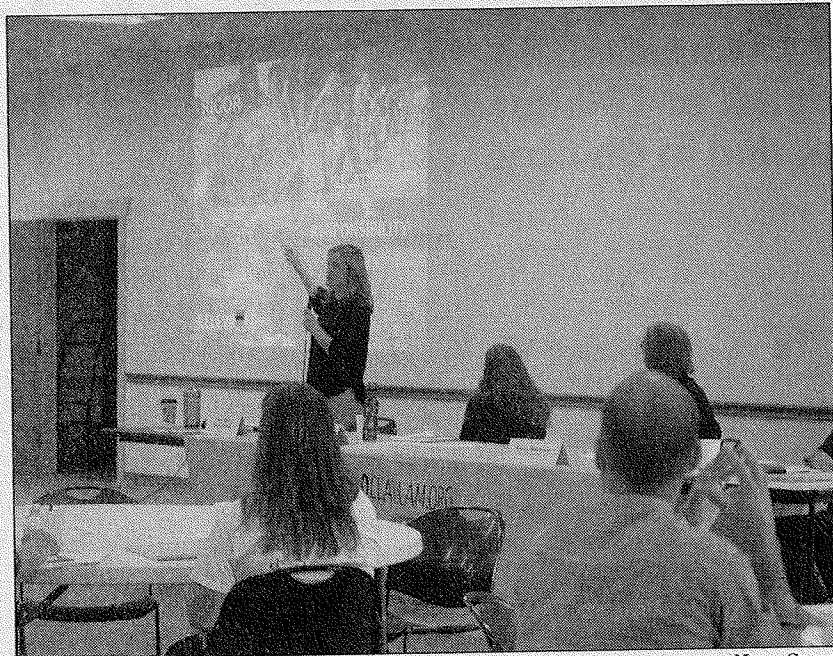
Mark Ozias, Clallam County commissioner and 2017 health assessment committee member, also said the forum was the first step in developing communication between community leaders to get a sense of where they should start.

"What's important about today is that there are a lot of policy makers in the room," he said.

"If we want a healthy community, that requires high level engagement, and the fact that we have those people here today is a really positive step."

The healthy community coalition hosted a panel of four speakers: Katie Rains, executive director of GRuB Olympia; Stacey Larsen, food service director of Port Townsend School District; Karen Obermeyer, health educator at Jefferson County Public Health; and Wally Endicott, executive director of Kids at Hope Northwest.

By the end of the three-hour session, community leaders developed three main action items to pursue — bringing GRuB into the county starting in Sequim, spreading Kids at Hope programs across the county through the Clallam Economic Development Corporation and ask-



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**Left, Katie Rains, executive director of GRuB Olympia, gave a presentation about the organization's services that aim to inspire community change by bringing people together around food and agriculture.**

ing the North Olympic Peninsula Development Council (NOPDC) to write a grant that would fund more healthful food in schools.

GRuB is an organization based in Olympia that aims to "inspire positive personal and community change by bringing people together around food and agriculture," Rains said.

One of the programs it offers is what Rains described as a "pollination program" that creates youth-centered projects based on GRuB's model.

Dixon said GRuB's pollination program is something that could be implemented into local school districts, starting in Sequim. She said GRuB's programs must be integrated into school district curriculum as credit for its services to be applied.

Kids at Hope Northwest programs offer evidence-based, strategic, cultural frameworks to provide the necessary training and program enhancements to support the success of children. Dixon said the goal with this program would be to increase training throughout the county in Sequim, Port Angeles and Forks.

The third action item involves the NOPDC — an organization that develops, supports and carries out regional plans for economic community development — writing a grant to the U.S. Department of Agricul-

ture by December for seed money so local school districts can move toward more healthful cooking.

Dixon said the overall context for the forum was to create, "collective efficacy — where small communities can share resources to build something bigger than themselves," she said.

"We can't depend on the feds or the state [to get things done], us in this room have to come up with a solution."

Ozias said while he doesn't think the health assessment was the impetus behind the forum, the data from it underscores the importance of this work.

"The Healthy Community Coalition's basis for existence is we recognize these problems and the data from the health survey underscores the importance of the work and where to target those efforts," he said.

In the future, Dixon said OPHCC is considering putting together a conference of community leaders in the spring to carry forward this work and build on it.

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