

Charting the Course Together for Health and Wellness in Oceanside

February 22nd, 2018, 10:00 a.m.—3:30 p.m.

Parksville Community Centre, Parksville

Community Actions Workshop Proceedings

Charting the Course Together for Health and Wellness in Oceanside: A Community Actions Workshop, was the second of two community gatherings hosted by OHWN, thanks to an Island Health Community Wellness Grant.

The first gathering was a Forum held on November 9th, 2018 that brought together over 50 community leaders to explore two priority issues of concern in Oceanside – food security for school-age children and mental health supports for youth and young adults. The second gathering was a broader community gathering focused on the same issues.

More than 80 participants and more than 40 organizations were present, including university representatives, service providers, local businesses, RCMP, community service organizations, local schools, government, and retirees for the Community Actions Workshop. This second gathering attracted leaders, community members and people with lived experiences to dig deeper into these issues and start making plans for collaborative action. Participants asked themselves, **“What can we do together, as a caring community, to enable a healthier community for children, youth and young adults?”**



Brenda Kent, the former OHWN Coordinator, opened the Workshop with a call to action challenge to the participants. She urged the group to look at the evidence about what has made a difference in other communities, but also encouraged them to use their wisdom and be innovative.

Participants split into two groups – one to focus on mental health supports for youth and young adults and another to look at food security for school-aged children. There was significant interest in mental health, with 75% of participants choosing that Issue.



The group addressing mental health and wellness for youth and young adults heard from Jim McCarthy, Coordinator of Mental Health and Substance Use Services at Oceanside Health Centre. He reflected on the need for enhanced services and resources, while highlighting some progress that has been made in mental health services for young people at Oceanside Health Centre.

Christine Brisson, Client Support Worker and the Young Adult Program Coordinator at Forward House Community Society, spoke about the value of connection, belonging and sense of community to young adults living with mental health challenges.



Workshop Overview

Many ideas of ways to improve mental health and wellbeing for youth and young adults were discussed and debated, including ways to increase social connection and belonging, reduce stigma, and enhance access to services. Participants emphasized the need to include youth and young adults in the conversation and explored concrete actions to encourage their involvement.



The food security group heard from H el ene Dufour, Community Nutritionist/Healthy Schools Lead Public Health Services from Island Health, who reinforced that eating breakfast is linked with improved overall health, well-being and stronger academic performance. She shared some preliminary evidence from a survey recently conducted on grade 6 students in School District 69 about their eating patterns. She was followed by Bobbi Coleman, volunteer with Arrowsmith Elementary School, who presented on the Arrowsmith Community Experience (A.C.E.) Club in Arrowsmith. The Oceanside program teaches vulnerable children food skills and provides access to healthy food at school.

Numerous ideas were generated on how to address the issue of food security for children in schools, at home and in community. Participants explored universal food programs in schools, partnerships with local business to make it easy for families to eat healthy food together, and ways of bringing food to underserved areas.

Dr. Jennifer Mullett, Community Psychologist and Director of the Centre for Healthy Communities Research at Vancouver Island University, spoke about collaboration and dialogue and while also emphasizing the importance of building on social capital and assets in the community.

Participants shared their commitment to move forward on ideas generated at the Workshop. **“There was such a feeling of being empowered about how there are so many community partners with shared values.”**

As next steps, OHWN will host two follow-up meetings to build on and move forward with the ideas for action generated at the workshop. This will also include finding more partners and leaders to take collaborative community actions and make a positive impact on the health of Oceanside’s young residents.

Want to get involved in these exciting activities? To learn more, please visit OHWN’s website at www.rdn.bc.ca/ohwn or contact info.ohwn@gmail.com or 250-228-0513.



Thank you to our sponsors for making this event possible.



Gems From Presenters & Workshop Outcomes

“New ideas that have traction are important to put on the table. Best innovation comes from community—you know the issues first hand, you know the players, and you can see the possibilities!”

- *Opening remarks from Brenda Kent, Former OHWN Coordinator*

“Mood/anxiety disorders and depression are the most prevalent chronic disease in Oceanside. ...We know there is a lot of great work being done in Oceanside by many community organizations. No one organization is able to address these issues alone – it requires a coordinated approach. ...The focus of our work also needs to be broader to include work on sustaining mental health and wellness in our community.”

- *Jim McCarthy, Coordinator of Mental Health and Substance Use Services at Oceanside Health Centre; Mental Health Action Group, OHWN*

“Belonging is at the heart of mental wellness. One of the most effective ways to combat anxiety, depression, isolation and addiction is to provide safe, open, accessible places for people to be in community with others. Opportunities for people living with mental illness to feel safe being themselves, to be free from judgement, and to be connected to others can be transformative - from both mental and physical health perspectives.”

- *Christine Brisson, Client Support Worker and the Young Adult Program Coordinator at Forward House Community Society*

“In a recent survey initiated by OHWN, 32 out of 252 Grade 6 children in Oceanside said they never or sometimes eat breakfast, and 75 children said they were hungry at school always or most of the time. Eating breakfast is linked with improved overall health, well-being and stronger academic performance.”

- *Hélène Dufour, Community Nutritionist/Healthy Schools Lead Public Health Services, Island Health Child Wellness, Action Group, OHWN*

“The Arrowsmith Community Experience (A.C.E.) after school program provides opportunities for Errington students to interact with a variety of community members to help them flourish at home, at school, in their local Arrowsmith community and beyond. The social connection developed in the process of preparing a meal, as cooking is at the heart of the program, is as important as the actual eating.”

- *Bobbi Coleman, Volunteer and Former Principal, Arrowsmith Elementary School*

“It is through collective actions we build a great community. The more we can come together, we can act collectively for impact, on these topics and any other topics we need to tackle. Today I have been thinking about the importance of understanding who is who, being motivated to engage in our conversation, figuring out who is in the best position of do something and what collaborators are best able to do collective impact.”

- *Closing remarks from Courtney Simpson, Senior Planner, Long Range Planning, Regional District of Nanaimo*

Workshop Outcomes

Validated as Serious Issues – 98% confirmed Food Security for School Aged Children and Supporting Mental Health of Youth and Young Adults are important issues that exist in Oceanside and must be addressed by the Community by collaborative actions for great impact.

Strong Commitment to Action – over 40 people committed to being interested in being involved in follow-up meetings to move forward on ideas for action identified at the Community Actions Workshop. 41% said they were willing to take a lead role and 63% said they or their organization were willing to participate.

New Ideas Sparked – the Project sparked new ideas about the challenges and action possibilities to address the complex issues. 84% of the participants of the Workshop said it was extremely or moderately useful for creating ideas for action.

Outreach and More Engagement is Critical – Participants were clear and universally supportive that more engagement was critical. Youth, young adults, children and their families must be involved and a community wide collaboration approach is essential to making change. Outreach to and supporting involvement of important groups is also critical.



Oceanside Health and Wellness Network (OHWN) Strategic Priorities & Goals

CHILD WELLNESS

OHWN is concerned about high child poverty rates in our region, and we recognize that many families struggle with accessing healthy and affordable food. OHWN is working on improving food security for school-aged children and youth by engaging partners to: support systems change; facilitate greater access to food; and raise awareness about child poverty, food insecurity and healthy eating in Oceanside.

Impact Statement:

By June 2019, food security for vulnerable school-aged children/youth living in Oceanside will be increased by 10%.

Goals:

30% of schools in SD 69 will increase the availability of healthy food (lunch, breakfast and/or snacks) accessible to all students by spring 2019.

At least five community stakeholders will initiate or enhance programs or policy that make healthy food more accessible and affordable for families by spring 2019.

MENTAL HEALTH

OHWN recognizes that there are increasing demands on the limited community resources that support mental health in Oceanside, particularly for young adults. OHWN is working on engaging key partners, identifying data that accurately reflect the need in the community, and raising awareness to take collective action on mental health.

Impact Statement:

By 2019, Oceanside communities will have greater access to timely, integrated services and accessible housing for young adults aged 16-30 who are living with mental health issues.

Goal:

Young adults living with mental health issues in Oceanside will benefit from timely access to local multilevel supports by 2019.





Food Security for School Aged Children Ideas Generated

The Food Security group met in small groups within the three main focus areas of Food Security “At School”, “At Home” and “In Community”. They began by brainstorming challenges and opportunities, followed by ideas that they honed into top three ideas for each area. These are the ideas the groups came up with. The group acknowledged significant cross-over between the Focus Areas within the issue of Food Security.

At School Focus Area

Universal Breakfast Program

A universal breakfast program ensures all school children have access to a healthy breakfast, regardless of need. This type of program would make it easier for vulnerable children not wanting to be singled out to receive food. The idea is to start with the schools in Oceanside where the need is greatest and expand from there.

“When I think of the big picture, I don’t see any reason that as a large group we can’t eradicate food insecurity in schools just a polio was eradicated.” - Service Club member.

Nutritional Food Recovery Program

Food recovery programs help provide nutritional food to those in need while reducing food waste and promoting sustainable food systems. Excess food or food that is safe but cannot be sold may be obtained from local farms, community gardens, stores, and markets. It could be cooked in certified kitchens and used by the food bank, school food programs, and other initiatives. The program would include community education and involvement.

Play First

Children are often excited to be outside at the lunch hour. With Play First, kids would play before eating lunch. When they come in to eat, they would sit together with teachers present. This would also be an opportunity for food exploration and learning.

Food Security means the availability, access and affordability of healthy, culturally appropriate food.

At Home Focus Area

Conversation Dinners

Conversation at dinner helps with creating social connection and family stability. At a Conversation Dinner, several families would come together to have a family-style dinner and share conversation cards. The cards would include topics the whole family would talk about, including developmentally appropriate topics for young children. The dinners would be hosted at trusted venues throughout the community (churches, halls, community organizations).

Mobile Food Banks

It is felt that not all Oceanside residents who need food are able to access current food banks with ease. Mobile food banks would fill this gap by bringing food to remote areas. An important part of this project is to assess real need rather than work from assumptions of where there is need.

In Community Focus Area

Grocery Store “Better Together” Family Meal Initiative

The idea is to support families with meal planning, family involvement in meal preparation and eating together. Grocery stores would showcase a meal and put the ingredients on sale. Pre-packed grocery bags would have the ingredients, a recipe and ideas for left-overs and suggestions on how to include kids in the meal preparation. Community members can donate coupons towards the grocery bags.

Social Media – Food Awareness Messages

Social media is a potent way to raise awareness and educate about food and food security. Messages on Facebook, Twitter and other sites could include “Did you know’...” related to food preparation, Oceanside food security statistics (i.e. number of kids not eating breakfast; percent of children not eating 5 vegetables a day) and other informative tips.



Mental Health Support for Youth and Young Adults

Ideas Generated

The Mental Health group met in small groups within the three main focus areas of “Social Connection”, “Stigma Reduction” and “Access to Services”. They began by brainstorming challenges and opportunities, followed by ideas that they honed into top three ideas for each area. These are the ideas the groups came up with.

Social Connection Focus Area

Youth Forum

A Youth Forum would bring youth and young adults together to discuss the issues raised at the Community Actions Workshop, sharing their perspectives with each other and with the larger community, including service providers.

Housing Project

This idea focused on the need for the Oceanside community to hear from youth and young adults about their housing needs as well as receive positive messages about creating healthy, inclusive communities.

Increased Collaboration Between Service Providers

While groups of service providers are well connected within Oceanside, there remains a significant gap across the board in understanding what is offered and where collaboration is needed. This idea includes creating a space for service providers to come together and learn from each other, such as a Service Providers’ Fair.

Stigma Reduction Focus Area

Ambassadors

Mental wellness would be promoted by local and regional youth ambassadors, leaders, and role models. This could be linked with existing programs, such as “Youth Week” with a mental health theme or initiatives like Bell Let’s Talk. An example is athlete Clara Hughes who has shared about her experiences with depression. Each person can also act as an ambassador and role model in their own life.

Education and Outreach

Methods to increase understanding of the general public about mental health issues were explored. Ideas included building on existing services, posting messages in the news, inviting media to events, and creating connections between young adults and younger youth in schools. Business, community, schools and service agencies could all be involved.

Community Building

As an early intervention to prevent stigma, people would be brought together in a variety of venues and situations so they feel that they have a place in the community. This would be especially important for young children and would be cross-generational wherever possible. Outreach to several different groups such as ElderCollege and seniors, churches, schools, agencies supporting families was suggested.

Access to Services Focus Area

Involve Youth

An important theme at the Workshop was to involve youth and young adults in these conversations. Examples include: youth groups, high school students, youth leaders, civic society, parents, alternative professional colleges, homeless youth, youth in care, and youth online.

Spaces for Youth Friendly Community

Participants identified a gap in understanding the places where youth and young adults feel comfortable going and those that they avoid. Asset mapping by youth and young adults of current spaces, including squatting spaces was suggested. The need for organizations to have open commitments from the top down in creating spaces for youth was highlighted. Additionally, the need for spaces that are welcoming in a trauma-informed way, from reception to the volunteer greeter to the service provider was also recommended. Community navigators who are aware of the services available can support each person as they walk through the door.

Conversations with Awareness

This idea is about caregivers, doctors, therapists, high-level managers and community members being able to have conversations about mental health with awareness of the issues. To support this, events could be held to train community members to speak about mental health issues. Also, community members are encouraged to talk about mental health in their networks to build a better awareness of mental health concerns and the opportunities available for support within the general community.



Feedback from Participants

Participants shared through feedback and evaluations what they viewed as the most meaningful insights, challenges and benefits of attending the Workshop and where we should go from here.

Support for Basic Needs

Participants voiced the need to address basic needs in support of mental health, namely housing, transportation (mentioned several times), and more spaces for youth to meet.

Education and Awareness

Participants suggested more education to generate greater awareness of need and supports available in the community. Improving community literacy, creating education frameworks for mental wellness, and tailoring education to multiple groups were some of the ideas brought forward.

“Tailored education for all areas of self, family, school, community groups employers, employees.”

Youth Involvement

Many participants highlighted the need for more connection with youth, and youth empowerment in finding solutions to the issues raised. They called for greater involvement of youth in this type of process (community workshop), in the media, and in the community in general.

“Creating more youth-friendly community so that they feel comfortable accessing services in their community.”

Meeting youth where they are with more one-to-one advocacy and wrap around services that support youth, particularly those transitioning towards becoming young adults was also raised in the evaluations.

Food Culture and Programs

The need to influence culture around food at schools and in community, particularly quality versus quantity of food and attitudes towards food among school children was raised. Participants also spoke of being inspired by food program ideas from the Workshop.

Networking and Sharing Ideas

Several participants mentioned that the most meaningful part of the workshop was seeing “who was at the table”, talking with other service providers, networking, and sharing of ideas. Many specifically mentioned the small group discussions and breakout sessions as the most valuable part of the day.

“Sharing conversation and ideas with passionate committed people in the community.”

“Love some of the ideas, amazing what can be done when people put their heads together.”

Collaboration

Participants said the workshop helped them “understand the value of collaboration between organizations, committees etc.” Several commented on the need to continue to build relationships to address complex issues, to continue to create cohesion and connection, to model collaboration and to increase cross-fertilization among service providers.

“Don't debate. Collaborate by inquiring about other's news and priorities with an open mind that leads to solutions.”

Next Steps

Suggestions for moving forward focused on creating more community events to raise awareness and to continue to educate community and keep the community at large informed about what is taking place. Some suggested hosting events in smaller areas in the region (i.e. Bowser, Errington). Participants indicated a strong willingness to be involved as leaders and participants, continuing to take small actions using the ideas from the workshop and as well as supporting collaboration and cross-pollination among service providers.

“Continue to host events like these on a regular basis, make the community aware of how prevalent these issues are.”

“Keep the community at large informed about the collaborative taking place in the community - awareness / education / invitations to get involved.”



Participants and Sponsors

Participating Organizations

Arrowsmith Community Recreation Association (ACRA)
Arrowsmith Lodge
Canadian Mental Health Association, Mid Island Branch Nanaimo
Captivating Details Ltd.
Career Centre
City of Parksville
Constituency Office, Michelle Stilwell, MLA
Errington School
Evans Consulting
Family Resource Association
Forward House Community Society
Haven Society
Financial Clarity
Island Health
John Howard Society North Island
Ministry of Child and Family Development
North Island College
Oceanside Division of Family Practice
Oceanside Health Centre
Qualicum First Nation
PASS/Woodwinds Secondary
Perfect Storm Group & Qualicum Beach-Parksville Healthcare Foundation
Regional District of Nanaimo
Rotary Club
Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)
School District 69 & Oceanside Building Learning Together
School District 69 (Qualicum)
Shift Collective
Springwood Elementary
Society of Organized Services
Town of Qualicum Beach
United Way Central and North Vancouver Island



We would like to heartfully thank all the participants at *Charting the Course Together for Health and Wellness in Oceanside: Community Actions Workshop* for bringing their insights, ideas and participation to the forum.

We acknowledge the following organizations for making this event possible:

Arrowsmith Lodge
Forward House Community Society
Island Health
Regional District of Nanaimo
Shift Collective

Join Us - Become an Oceanside Health and Wellness Network Member

www.rdn.bc.ca/join-ohwn

Contribute to vibrant, healthy communities in Oceanside.

Individuals and organizations are invited to join OHWN. Members benefit by:

- influencing change on issues affecting the health and wellness of communities in Oceanside;
- providing input into emergent issues and OHWN's priority areas participating in collective action;
- engaging with the community and developing collaborative relationships.

To learn more about OHWN, please visit:

www.rdn.bc.ca/ohwn