

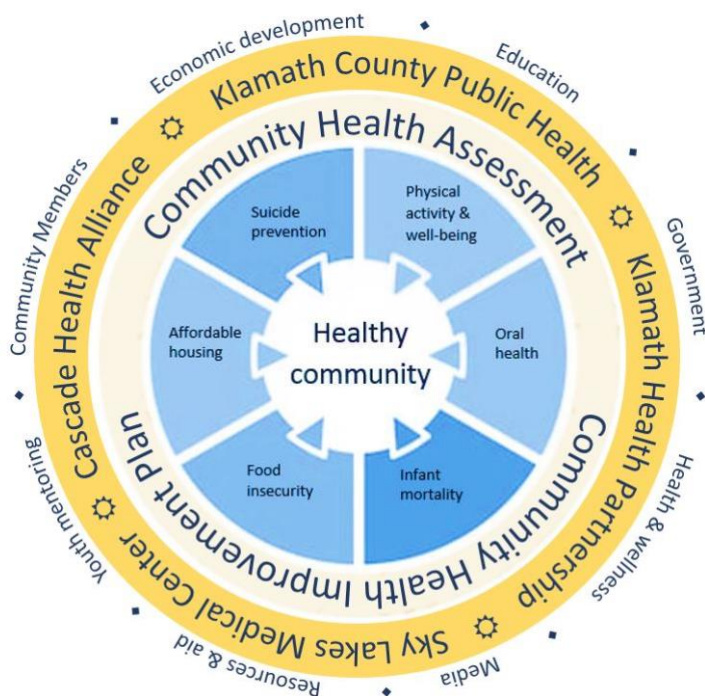
How Becoming a “Blue Zone” Advanced the Health of Klamath Falls, Oregon



Sky Lakes Medical Center (SLMC), located in Klamath Falls, Oregon, is a rural, not-for-profit, community-owned, internationally accredited acute-care teaching hospital. It is licensed for 176 beds and offers a full range of inpatient and outpatient services, including the Sky Lakes Cancer Treatment Center and Center for Total Joint Care; a home health agency; primary care and specialty physician clinics; the Cascades East Family Medicine residency program (in cooperation with Oregon Health & Science University) and clinic; and the Sky Lakes Wellness Center. Sky Lakes serves some 80,000 people in a 10,000-square-mile area in south-central Oregon and northern California. The region includes the high-desert regions of Klamath and Lake Counties in Oregon, and Modoc and Siskiyou Counties in California.

Healthy Klamath

The Healthy Klamath Coalition is a multi-sector partnership comprised of SLMC, Klamath County Public Health, Klamath Open Door, and Cascade Health Alliance and created to guide community health improvement efforts in Klamath County, Oregon. Klamath County is the fourth largest county in Oregon and the size of Connecticut but is home to only 66,443 people.



The community mobilized forming the coalition in response to consistently low rankings in the annual Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) County Health Rankings. Below is a diagram showing the framework and the partner organizations and illustrates Healthy Klamath's approach to community health improvement as strengthened through partnerships and cross-sector collaboration.

In 2013 beginning with its Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP), SLMC and the Coalition began a comprehensive initiative to improve the health of its population. The effort was reinforced in the 2016 CHIP and in 2018, two models, Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnerships (MAPP) and the County Health Rankings model, were used to guide the process for the 2019 CHIP.

The MAPP model was developed in 2001 by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO). MAPP is a community-wide strategic planning process for improving public health. This framework helps communities prioritize

public health issues, identify resources to address them, and take action to improve conditions that support healthy living.

The County Health Rankings model focuses on the physical, social, environmental, and health factors that influence health outcomes. This comprehensive model includes Health Outcomes, which are length of life (mortality) and quality of life (morbidity), and Health Factors, which are the determinants that influence health and overall outcomes. The outcomes and factors are then broken down into components and subcomponents.

The ultimate goal is to support the systematic adoption, implementation, and evaluation of successful programs, practices, and policy changes. Over the past several years, dedicated community members, leaders, and organizations have launched numerous initiatives to address the health factors contributing to poor health outcomes in Klamath County.

The Promising Practices database found on the Healthy Klamath website provides carefully reviewed, documented, and ranked practices that range from good ideas to evidence-based practices. These practices and other tools are accessible to the public and can be adopted to fit their unique needs.

Klamath Works



Klamath Works is committed to improving the social and economic quality of life in the Klamath Basin. Beginning in 2014, SLMC, government agencies, faith-based organizations, law enforcement and business partners have rallied around a common goal to help those in need return to self-sufficiency by preparing them for work.

At the heart of the effort is the Klamath Works Job Program. Participants meet with job coaches to build individualized plans aimed at helping them find, keep and succeed in a job.

The program is headquartered at the 18 acre Klamath Works Campus constructed in 2016 through the generous support of SLMC. The Klamath Works Campus is a new comprehensive, integrated social service model that will not only help those in need support themselves financially, but to fully realize their human potential.

Blue Zone Project

In 2015, Klamath Falls was selected to be the first Blue Zones Project demonstration site in the Pacific Northwest. Blue Zones Project is a community-led well-being improvement initiative designed to make healthy choices easier through permanent changes to a city's environment, policy, and social networks. SLMC, Cambia Health Foundation, Cascade Health Alliance, the City of Klamath Falls, and Klamath County provided financial backing to support the project. In recognition of the community's efforts to

improve health outcomes, Klamath County, Oregon was awarded the 2018 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Culture of Health Prize.



In December 2020, Healthy Klamath, Sky Lakes Medical Center, Sharecare, Inc. and Blue Zones, LLC announced that Klamath Falls has achieved certified Blue Zones Community® status. The certification recognizes Klamath Falls’ community well-being transformation through successful implementation of the Blue Zones Project® by Sharecare, a population health program that brings evidence-based best practices in built environment, policy, and social networks to participating cities.

The SLMC Wellness Center located in Klamath Falls is an integral part of the Blue Zone Success. The Center offers classes in fitness, mindfulness and nutrition and offers a lifestyle change program. It demonstrates a more effective healthcare model that strengthens health and wellbeing through chronic disease prevention and reversal, community policy and built environment efforts, and innovation.

Conclusion

The efforts on behalf of Paul Stewart, CEO and SLMC has been a work in progress taking place over decades. It was inspired through the SLMC comprehensive community health surveys’ needs assessments and improvement plans.

Historically at the bottom of RWJF’s Oregon county health rankings, Klamath County has seen reduced crime, improved high school graduation rates, better management of chronic disease and mental health, improved housing conditions, better food security and more. This effort required a heavy investment of time and money, but the results have been remarkable.

Mr. Stewart recognized that action was needed to be a healthier place. “Trying to accomplish that only by treating illness and injury – though quite necessary -- was not a winning strategy to creating health.” Rather they set off to change the very fabric of the system. “A system in which we invest in collaborative efforts to improve the health, the self-reliance and the well-being of the people we serve,” said Mr. Stewart.

Through the leadership of SLMC and the other core collaborators - Klamath County Public Health, Klamath Open Door, and Cascade Health Alliance – the community’s lifestyle has improved, the economy has grown and it is a healthier and safer place to live.

Mr. Stewart notes that the hard work is not over, “Improved health and a feeling of well-being is a journey, not a destination.”

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