COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

CLATSOP, COLUMBIA & TILLAMOOK COUNTIES

COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM, INC.
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ABOUT THIS REPORT

This report presents information as a region — Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook Counties — and separately for each county. Data is from community leader interviews, client focus groups, client surveys, the U.S. Census Bureau, Oregon Housing and Community Services and other relevant reports and documents.

Thirty-six community leaders from across the region were interviewed. They were representatives from the faith community, business, education, healthcare, county government and social service agencies. During one-on-one interviews, they were asked to identify three to four of the most pressing needs in their communities. Consensus emerged on many issues. Affordable housing ranked as the top need all three counties are facing.
In each county, clients were asked to fill out a written survey with 12 needs from which to pick, with room for identifying additional needs. They agreed with the community leaders—57 percent selected housing as their greatest need, followed by food, transportation and energy assistance.

Forty-three clients participated in focus groups. Following a discussion covering a variety topics, they were given a written list of 13 needs and asked to check all that applied to them. There was also space to add needs. Energy assistance received the most nods. Lack of cash and then housing were next. More than half identified affordable housing as a priority need.

Finding agreement on the need for affordable housing was not surprising. The draft of Oregon’s Statewide Housing Plan, released in November 2018, opens with this statement:

*Across Oregon, housing has emerged as a paramount concern. The lack of available housing, high rents and high home prices are driving rapid increases in housing instability and homelessness. The data is clear: too many Oregonians are without a safe, stable and affordable place to call home.*
COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM AND ITS “COMMUNITY”

Community Action Team, Inc. (CAT) provides anti-poverty programs in three northwest Oregon counties – Clatsop, Columbia and Tillamook. CAT, located in Columbia County, works with two subgrantees on the coast to deliver services there. Community Action Resource Enterprises, Inc. (CARE) serves Tillamook County and in Clatsop County, it’s Clatsop Community Action (CCA). CAT aids over 16,000 individuals annually in the tri-county region.

CAT’s mission is to connect people with the resources needed to become self-sufficient. It envisions vibrant communities with hope and opportunity where basic needs are met.

While counties in the region are different from each other in many respects, they share multiple characteristics that contribute to economic insecurity for many residents and impact the level of poverty — a shortage of affordable housing, absence of living-wage jobs, substance abuse and mental illness with limited resources for treatment; homelessness; and lack of public transportation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
<th>Population Density Per Square Mile</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>112,857</td>
<td>43.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clatsop County</td>
<td>37,660</td>
<td>45.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia County</td>
<td>49,645</td>
<td>75.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tillamook County</td>
<td>25,552</td>
<td>23.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>3,982,267</td>
<td>41.49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-16
Columbia County has the largest population and Tillamook the smallest.

The chart below shows the rural nature of the region. Tillamook County’s rural population far exceeds that of its urban residents. Each of the counties is significantly lower in its urban population than Oregon and the United States.

US Census Bureau, Decennial Census, 2010
The median household income for the region is below that of Oregon and the United States.

**Median Household Income**

- **Region**: $48,805
- **Clatsop County**: $47,492
- **Columbia County**: $55,146
- **Tillamook County**: $43,777
- **Oregon**: $57,532
- **United States**: $57,617

Home ownership in Columbia County exceeds the national level and that of Oregon. Tillamook County is far below the region, Oregon and the United States in the number of individuals who own their homes.

The decline of timber and fishing industry jobs began several decades earlier but continues to adversely impact the region’s economy. While the growth in the tourist industry has created jobs in Clatsop and Tillamook Counties, the pay level is significantly lower than what workers earned in forest and fishing-related employment. Job losses in Columbia County have given rise to a workforce of commuters to Portland.

This economic environment affects individuals, families and the social fabric of each community. Finding solutions to the changing economic conditions that produce poverty will vary as each community responds to its unique needs. The challenge will be to support individual county efforts while using CAT’s regional resources for the greatest impact.

CLATSOP COUNTY

Clatsop County is Oregon’s most northern coastal county and its largest city, Astoria, sits at the mouth of the Columbia River. Looking north from the city, the Astoria-Megler Bridge, spans the Columbia River connecting Oregon and Washington.

In the winter of 1805-06, the Lewis and Clark expedition established Fort Clatsop as one of the earliest settlements on the west coast of North America. The site is protected as part of the Lewis and Clark National and State Historical Parks.

There are five incorporated cities in Clatsop County—by population size—Astoria, Seaside, Cannon Beach, Gearhart and Warrenton. Cannon Beach, a resort destination, is known for its arts community. Seaside attracts tourists for weekend getaways, cultural events like the annual Seaside Jazz Festival and to visit the Seaside Aquarium.

The Astoria Warrenton Chamber of Commerce reports that Astoria has been called the “Little San Francisco of the Pacific Northwest” because of its steep hills and beautiful Victorian homes. Astoria’s picturesque setting attracts movie makers, and many major films have been shot in the area. Astoria was established as a fur trading post in 1811 by a party commissioned by John Jacob Astor.
There are two hospitals, Columbia Memorial in Astoria and Providence Seaside Hospital, which is part of Oregon’s largest health system. It is also the largest private employer in Clatsop County. The Federally Qualified Heath Center, (FQHC), is in Astoria. A FQHC is a federal reimbursement designation for Medicare and Medicaid services.

Clatsop County has a larger homeless population than Columbia or Tillamook counties. The issue is more acute in Astoria and city government created a Homeless Solution Task Force, of which Clatsop Community Action is a member, to tackle the problem. Its first objective, which it is undertaking now, is to educate the community about homelessness and its causes.

Out of the 12 Clatsop County community leaders interviewed for this report, eight said substance abuse/addiction was one of the pressing issues facing the county, which they believe has contributed to the rise in homelessness.

Across Oregon, there is a lack of affordable housing. This affects people of all income levels. In Clatsop County, workers unable to find housing live great

“We have pretty serious issues around substance abuse and addiction in our community, and we lack a highly effective coordinated response to that.”
Clatsop County Administrator

“I credit CCA and city government for bringing people together to create an understanding of the complexity of the homeless issue, of what can lead a person to be homeless, of how easy it is to find yourself in that situation.”
Chamber of Commerce Executive
“They can’t get the workers here they need. Right now, there are buses that come from Longview, Washington that are filled with cannery workers. Hospitality workers are also bused in.”

Chamber of Commerce Executive

With a population of 37,660, Clatsop County has seen a growth rate of 0.74 percent from 2015 to 2016. Its median household income grew 2.34 percent to $47,492 in 2016. At 60.3 percent, home ownership is less than that of Oregon, 61.7 percent, and the national average of 63.6 percent\(^1\).

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-16

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1 DatausaUSA.io, U.S. Census, American Community Survey, 2016
The racial makeup of Clatsop County is predominantly white, reflecting rates in Oregon and the region.

In 2016 the county's workforce was 16,840 employees. The county's main industries are below:
COLUMBIA COUNTY

The Columbia River hugs Columbia County’s northern and eastern borders for over sixty miles. At 49,645 the county’s population is concentrated in the southern part of the county, close to its border with Multnomah County, Oregon’s largest county and home to Portland. Up to 75-80 percent of Columbia County workers commute to Portland and its suburbs for employment.

The most common method of commuting is driving alone, 78.2 percent and carpooling, 12.2 percent. Of those in the workforce, 5.53 percent work at home[2].

St. Helens is the county seat and the largest city at 13,701. Followed by the next largest cities—Scappoose, Vernonia, Rainier, Columbia City, Clatskanie and Prescott.

“We have allowed a culture of commuting to take over in Columbia County as we lost a lot of the timber industry.”

Columbia County Commissioner

2 Ibid
The county experienced a growth rate of 0.52 percent from 2015 to 2016. The homeownership rate for Columbia County is 71.8 percent which is higher than the national average of 63.6 percent\(^3\).

While the racial makeup of the county mirrors Oregon and the region, the percentage of white residents is slightly higher than in Clatsop and Tillamook Counties.

“\textit{When the timber jobs left, nothing has come in to replace them.}”

Food Bank Executive Director

Columbia County’s economy was heavily dependent on lumber mills. When the timber industry collapsed in the 1980s, laid-off workers struggled to find work. The loss of timber money rippled throughout the economy. Local governments lost a significant portion of their tax

\(^3\) Ibid

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-16
base impacting their ability to deliver services. One of the county's biggest challenges has been developing new industries.

Currently, the majority of Columbia County residents make their living in manufacturing. The median household income in 2016 was $55,146.
The Oregon Manufacturing Innovation Center (OMIC) in Scappoose is touted by business and community leaders as an economic catalyst for Columbia County. Its mission is to develop and apply advanced metal manufacturing technologies and processes for industrial competitive advantage and academic growth, while inspiring and educating the next generation’s manufacturing workforce.

OMIC is modeled after the University of Sheffield Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre in England. It is a collaboration of industry, higher education and government. Its goal is to combine applied research and development and workforce training in the metals industry.

In 2017 OMIC received $6 million in startup funds from a $3 million grant from the U.S. Department of Commerce and an Oregon match of $3 million in state bonds. Since then, the Oregon Legislature has approved additional funding bringing the total state investment to $21.5 million. While economic gains and increased employment are not immediately expected, officials project that within ten years, 2,000 jobs will be added to the 20,840 currently employed residents.

Columbia County lacks a hospital and a community college or university. Residents drive across the Columbia River to Longview, Washington or to Portland for some medical services. The Community Health Center of Clatskanie is the Federally Qualified Heath Center. For higher education opportunities, Portland offers a community college and four universities.

“I worry about trying to bring tourism to Columbia County. Those are not living-wage jobs.”

Former County Commissioner
TILLAMOOK COUNTY

Tillamook County boasts 75 miles of scenic coastline, four bays and nine rivers. It attracts recreation seekers for whale watching, kayaking and fishing. Tourism, as an economic force, is rising.

With a land mass of 1,102 square miles and a population of 25,552, Tillamook County's population density per square mile is 23.18. Of Oregon's 36 counties, it is ranked the 21st most populated.

There is one hospital, Tillamook Regional Medical Center under Adventist Health in the city of Tillamook. The Tillamook County Health Department operates the Federally Qualified Health Center. There are clinics in Rockaway Beach, Hebo and Tillamook that serve between 3,000 and 5,000 patients annually.

“Tillamook is becoming Touristy. It's being discovered like Clatsop County was.”
Retired Nonprofit Executive Director

“A lot of the community thinks it's still a middle-class community of hard-working farmers, loggers and fishermen. Sixty percent of our kids are at or below the poverty line. Half of our kids' families live paycheck to paycheck at best. We have about 200 kids out of 2,000 that are homeless.”
Tillamook School Superintendent

4 U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-16
Tillamook County is home to 25,552 people and has experienced a growth rate of 0.48 percent from 2015 to 2016. Tillamook County’s median income is below the region, Oregon and the United States at $43,777. At 33.1 percent, the homeownership rate is the lowest of the three counties and a little more than half the rate for Oregon and the United States.

Like the region, the dominant race is white. Tillamook County has the largest Hispanic population of all three counties which is tied to its agricultural economy.
Not surprisingly, with the world-famous Tillamook Creamery located in the county, dairy farms dominate the agricultural industry. The Tillamook Creamery is the largest private employer.

The 9,859 employees in Tillamook County were employed in these industries in 2016:

“We no longer have the middle-class wages to support a family. It’s that way nationally. We don’t have a housing problem, we have a wage problem.”

Tillamook County Commissioner
WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE IN POVERTY?

When individuals lack the economic means to provide basic necessities such as food, safe drinking water, shelter, healthcare and clothing, they are considered to be “in poverty.” Experiencing poverty can also include deprivation of opportunities to learn and to obtain jobs, or if working, find better employment.

The Federal Poverty Level, established by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, is used to determine eligibility for public assistance for programs such as Medicaid, Children’s Health Program (CHIP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and food stamps—Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The poverty rate is adjusted annually.

“Poverty is really the lack of freedom to have or to do basic things that you value.”
Amartya Sen,
1998 Nobel Laureate in Economics.
Eligibility for federal poverty programs is based on household size and is the income level below which a household is considered in poverty. For example, the poverty level for a household of four is an annual income of $24,000. Add $4,320 for each additional person in the household and conversely subtract the same amount if the family is smaller.

The Federal Poverty Level does not account for regional differences in the cost of living, such as housing or childcare expenses. For Oregon, which has an affordable housing crisis in both urban and rural communities, not factoring housing costs in determining poverty guidelines does not adequately represent the level of poverty in Oregon's communities.

“Overcoming poverty is not a gesture of charity. It is the protection of a fundamental human right, the right to dignity and a decent life.”

Nelson Mandela,
Former President of South Africa
Nobel Laureate in Peace
WHO IS IN POVERTY?

Oregon’s poverty rate, at 15.7 percent, remains above the national level of 15.5 percent[^5]. The region’s poverty rate, at 14.3 percent is below that of Oregon and the United States.

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**Population Below Poverty Level**

![Chart showing poverty rates in different regions](image)

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-16

“*The test of our progress is not whether we add more to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.*”

Franklin D. Roosevelt, 32nd President of the United States

[^5]: U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-2016
Children are especially vulnerable and continue to be disproportionately represented in the population of those living in poverty. Children International reports that the childhood poverty rate is much higher in the United States than in other developed countries. The organization says that one child in every seven will be born into poverty in the United States. The US Census data for Oregon and the region supports that assessment. In the region, 55 percent of female heads of household with related children under five experience poverty.\(^6\)

\(^6\) Ibid

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-16
The Head Start program provides comprehensive early childhood education, health, nutrition and parent-involvement services to low-income children and their families. CAT’s Head Start program is available in all three counties. In the 2015-16 program year, it served 434 children.

The effectiveness of Head Start and its ability to stop intergenerational poverty has been a debated public policy question since the program’s inception in 1965. A 2018 study by researchers at Texas A&M University and the University of Notre Dame shows that Head Start not only had positive effects on those enrolled in the program during its early years, but that those benefits also extended to their children. The results from that research show that children born to parents in the lowest quintile of the income distribution are twice as likely to end up in poverty as children born to middle-income parents.[7]

“I tell my staff we have a chance to change kids’ lives, and their kids and their kids. What we see is generational poverty. If we can break that just once, it’s a whole string of kids.”

Tillamook School Superintendent

Women are more likely than men to be poor. Female employees tend to work retail and hospitality jobs that pay less than careers more traditionally associated with men such as construction and engineering. This is especially true in communities heavily reliant on tourism as is the case in Clatsop County, and a growing trend in Tillamook County.

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-16
One indicator of the level of poverty in a community is the number of children eligible for free and reduced-price lunches in schools. Tillamook County leads the region in the number of children eligible for free and reduced-priced lunches at 58.22 percent.\(^8\)

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\(^8\) National Center for Education Statistics, NCES - Common Core of Data, 2015-16
HOUSING

Nationally, as well as locally, incomes have not kept pace with the rising cost of housing. Housing has become less affordable for almost everyone. Lower-income working households are especially hard hit.

Federal and state investments in low-cost housing are not adequate. As a result, funding for subsidized housing is highly competitive, favoring the efficiency of larger projects and not typically scaled for smaller communities like those in CAT’s region. This contributes to the region’s deficit of affordable housing for those earning less than $25,000 annually.
The lack of affordable housing was near the top of every survey CAT conducted for this report. Community leaders across all three counties rated it as the number one pressing issue. In client focus groups, housing ranked as a priority. Housing was the number one need clients identified in a written survey.

For Tillamook and Clatsop counties, a large number of second homes remain unoccupied most of the year. That reduces housing available for full-time residents. A Tillamook County 2017 review of housing, *Creating a Healthy Housing Market for Tillamook County*, reports that 39 percent of homes are “seasonal units.” That means that 7,223 out of 18,419 homes sit vacant the majority of the year as vacation homes or rentals.

In Clatsop County, over 50 percent of the homes in Cannon Beach and Gearhart are second homes.

Clatsop County Homeownership

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>City</th>
<th>Owner-occupied (%)</th>
<th>2nd homes (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Astoria</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cannon Beach</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gearhart</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seaside</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Warrenton</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Clatsop County Housing Study, 2018
The Columbia County housing market is affected by economic and housing conditions in the Portland metro area. When housing prices rise in Portland, people employed there become more willing to commute to work from Columbia County.

Across the region, rents have steadily continued to rise. Median rent in Columbia County has consistently been lower than in Clatsop and Tillamook counties.
In the region, Tillamook County has always had the highest rental cost.

If one earns minimum wage, the chart below shows the number of hours one will need to work per week to afford a two-bedroom unit across the region.

### Hours Needed to Work per Week to Rent a Two-Bedroom Unit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Weeks Needed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>REGION</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLATSOP COUNTY</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COLUMBIA COUNTY</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TILLAMOOK COUNTY</td>
<td>59</td>
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<tr>
<td>OREGON</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Median Rent for a Two-Bedroom Apartment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>April 2012</th>
<th>January 2017</th>
<th>Percent Increase</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Clatsop County</td>
<td>$1,165</td>
<td>$1,515</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia County</td>
<td>$1,072</td>
<td>$1,501</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tillamook County</td>
<td>$1,219</td>
<td>$1,537</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>$1,216</td>
<td>$1,619</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zillow Rental Index

Oregon Statewide Housing Study, 2018, Oregon Housing and Community Services
Two out of nine individuals are paying more than 50 percent of their income in rent in Clatsop County, one out of four in Columbia County and three out of ten in Tillamook County⁹.

**Energy Cost**

In the focus groups, “energy cost” was one need clients could choose. Twenty-seven of the 43 participants selected energy cost. Tillamook County clients said it was their greatest need –19 of 21. In the written survey, 19 percent said energy assistance was a need.

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⁹ Oregon Statewide Housing Plan 2018, Oregon Housing and Community Services
Housing Resources

Northwest Oregon Housing Authority (NOHA) covers CAT's service area. It provides Housing Choice Vouchers, the federal government's program for assisting low-income families. These vouchers can be used to pay landlords who agree to participate in Section 8 housing. NOHA owns and manages 11 affordable properties in the region. Agency staff report that there is a two to three-year waiting list for Section 8 housing.

Clatsop Community Action owns the Hilltop Apartments, a two and three-bedroom building. Currently, there is a 12-month waiting period.

CAT's affordable housing is located in Vernonia, Cannon Beach, St. Helens and Scappoose, totaling 166 units. It is currently building a 16-unit apartment complex in St. Helens that will provide additional housing.

Through its Housing Rehabilitation Program, CAT offers zero percent, deferred-payment loans, with no monthly payment. Both the homeowner and the repairs need to qualify. CAT's weatherization program serves the region and increases a home's energy efficiency, reducing energy costs for its inhabitants. CAT staff work with homeowners to prevent foreclosure. Clients may also qualify for help with mortgage payments and property taxes.

CAT, CARE and CCA all provide temporary rental assistance. Each organization also helps clients with home heating costs through the federally-funded Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program.
HOMELINESS

There are many reasons why people become homeless. Among them are job loss, family breakup, domestic violence, mental illness, alcohol and drug addiction and natural disasters.

Every two years during the last ten days of January, Oregon counties conduct a count of homeless individuals called the Point-in-Time Homeless Count (PITHC) which is required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. The PITHC attempts to capture the number of people who are living without shelter and those who have shelter, but no permanent residence. The 2017 PITHC reported that the number of homeless people in Oregon increased by six percent.

Many believe, that while this gives some idea of the number of homeless people, it is far from an accurate assessment. Often the PITHC is understaffed and relies on volunteers whose ability and commitment varies. Harsh weather conditions can reduce the number of volunteers.

Oregon officials agree about the difficulty in counting homeless people. The Oregon Housing and Community Services website says of the 2017 count, “This year proved especially difficult due to the severity of the Oregon winter. Furthermore, some homeless families are not in shelter or on the streets but are living with friends and family.”

“You can’t treat homelessness if you don’t treat why they became homeless in the first place—lack of job skills, mental health, addiction. Getting someone hired after those experiences is really challenging.”

St. Helens School District Administrator
All of these factors demonstrate the flaw when trying to assess homelessness. They explain why the charts below, Sheltered and Unsheltered Homeless and Homeless Youth, are not an accurate count of homeless people in Columbia County. The charts show that in Columbia County the number of homeless people declined from 317 individuals in 2015 to 158 in 2017, and the number of homeless youth dropped from 37 to 9 in that same time period.

“**When I see resistance to homeless services, I say ‘How do you expect someone to get out of that level of poverty if they can’t make themselves presentable enough to go to a job interview?’**”

Columbia County Commissioner

Research conducted for this report indicates that the number of homeless adults and youth in Columbia County did not decline. For example, the St. Helen’s School District’s student homeless rate mirrors that of Oregon’s, which is between three to four percent annually. A St. Helens school administrator said that the school district has from 100 to 120 homeless students each year, K-12. The Columbia Pacific Food Bank records show that in St. Helens in 2017, it served 354 homeless families, up from 192 in 2015.
**Homeless Population**

![Bar chart showing homeless population in Clatsop, Columbia, and Tillamook counties for 2015 and 2017.](chart)

*Point-in-Time Count, Oregon Housing and Community Services*

**Homeless Youth**

![Bar chart showing homeless youth in Clatsop, Columbia, and Tillamook counties for 2015 and 2017.](chart)

*Oregon Housing and Community Services*
“When your dignity is gone, when you’re homeless and hungry, maybe you self-medicate so it’s a symptom as well as a cause of homelessness.”

Astoria Presbyterian Pastor

Homeless Resources

The region is bereft of homeless shelters and the ones that exist are limited by the types of individuals they accept. At one shelter, there is a religious focus. At others, the shelters are open to survivors of domestic violence which are mostly women. Clatsop County has two shelters. There is one in Columbia County. In Tillamook County there are two.

Clatsop County — Helping Hands is an emergency shelter that accepts individuals on a referral only basis. It provides case management and emphasizes trauma-informed care. The Astoria Rescue Mission is a Christian Evangelical shelter for women and men. It is primarily concerned with “seeing lives saved and introducing people to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, helping them develop a relationship with HIM.”

Columbia County — The Starting Place, a program of SAFE of Columbia County, provides temporary refuge for adults and their children seeking safety from domestic violence, sexual assault and/or stalking.

Tillamook County — The Pacific House Emergency Shelter, operated by the Tillamook County Women’s Resource Center, serves women fleeing domestic and sexual violence. Helping Hands also has a clean and sober shelter in Tillamook.
HEALTH

Poverty and poor health are inextricably linked. Poverty is both a cause and a consequence of poor health. Access to primary care and specialty care is critical in ensuring good health outcomes. However, access to primary care doctors varies significantly from county to county and the rate for the region is below Oregon’s. Possessing good health includes physical, mental and oral health.

PHYSICAL HEALTH AND PRIMARY CARE

Access to Primary Care Doctors per 100,000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Access Rate per 100,000</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>61.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clatsop County</td>
<td>80.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Columbia County</td>
<td>34.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tillamook County</td>
<td>86.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>87.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

US Dept. of Health and Human Services, 2014
Access to primary care physicians in the region falls way below the rate in Oregon.

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation rates health outcomes in the United States and for each state, ranks its counties. In Oregon, the foundation's 2018 report shows Washington County at number one, leading Oregon's 36 counties in overall favorable health outcomes and Jefferson County last. Clatsop County ranked 23rd in overall health outcomes. Columbia County registered at 10 and Tillamook County at 18. The foundation also ranks clinical care and these are how the region's counties fared — Clatsop 22, Columbia 18 and Tillamook 26.

The Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization (CCO) is the local Medicaid insurer for the region. It reports that “health disparity issues in rural areas include but are not limited to: geographic separation; high patient ratio per number of providers to Oregon Health Plan members; limited resources; health
care provider mix; and difficulty coordinating care between hospitals, clinics, behavioral health agencies and social service safety net providers.”

Federally Qualified Health Centers are community assets that provide healthcare to vulnerable populations. They receive extra funding from the federal government to promote access to ambulatory care in areas designated as medically underserved. There are four in Tillamook County and one each in Clatsop and Columbia counties.

All three counties are classified as Medically Underserved, a federal designation, because they have too few healthcare providers. Columbia County does not have a hospital. There are two hospitals in Clatsop County and one in Tillamook County.
Many of the region’s residents engage in behaviors that cause poor health—heavy alcohol consumption, widespread tobacco use and high rates of death from drug overdoses, especially in Tillamook County.
The region’s residents make few visits to the dentist and have poor nutrition. These behaviors, coupled with a lack of access to medical care, lead to poor health outcomes.

**ORAL HEALTH**

The Oregon Community Foundation reports that Oregon has one of the country’s highest rates of childhood dental disease, which is the most common chronic disease affecting U.S. children. Dental pain caused by tooth decay is also one of the main reasons elementary age students miss school. These absences impact their academic achievement and future success.
Dental conditions are the second most common reason adults and children come to the emergency department at Providence Seaside Hospital in Clatsop County. Nearly 20 percent of respondents in the hospital’s survey went without needed dental care in 2015\[10\].

### SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND ADDICTION

Substance abuse is harmful to individuals, families and communities. The effects of addiction are cumulative, contributing to costly social, physical, mental, and public health problems.

\[\text{Centers for Disease Control & Prevention, 2016-10}\]
Opioid abuse is rampant across the United States. Oregon and the region have not escaped the deadly effect of these drugs. From 2004 to 2014, the number of deaths from prescription drug overdoses in Oregon rose 450 percent. There are more deaths per year from prescription drug overdose than there are from automobile accidents.[11]

Oregon Health Authority data shows that from 2009 to 2011, Clatsop County had the highest hospitalization rate from opioid overdoses, followed by Columbia County and Tillamook County. Beginning in 2011 through 2016, opioid overdose deaths were the greatest in Tillamook County, then Clatsop and Columbia. All three counties were above Oregon in rates of opioid deaths during that time period.

“There is a stigma about being poor and getting help from the government. In small communities everyone knows your business, and it’s hard to get help for addiction issues.”

Columbia Pacific CCO Administrator

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2012-16

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11 Columbia Pacific CCO Community Health Assessment, 2014
In 2014, the Columbia Pacific CCO reported that its Clinical Advisory Panel recommended creating non-prescribing, behavior-based pain clinics as an alternative to treat patients’ pain. In 2016, the North Coast Opioid’s summit convened providers, pharmacists, behavioral health specialists, law enforcement members and public health professionals to discuss a plan for addressing the opioid epidemic.

That gathering resulted in the formation of the North Coast Substance Use Steering Committee. The steering committee is working with the Clinical Advisory Panel to develop regional action plans that improve clinical prescribing, decrease pills in circulation, increase Naloxone access, boost access to medication-assisted treatment and create community education campaigns.

A Drug Court is a specialty court that handles cases involving substance-abusing offenders through comprehensive supervision, drug testing and treatment services. Clatsop County has an Adult Drug Court and a Family Treatment Court, both for substance abuse. Columbia County has four specialty courts that deal with substance abuse – Juvenile Treatment Court, Adult Treatment Court, Family Treatment Court and a Veteran Treatment Court.

Tillamook County Commissioners investigated establishing a Drug Court, but there was opposition from the district attorney. As of December 2018, there are no specialty courts in Tillamook County.

“We’ve seen an 18 percent increase in seniors needing services in the last year. Their story is different than the old drug addict that comes in the door.”

Homeless Shelter Provider in Clatsop and Tillamook Counties
Some Tillamook community leaders believe that a few public officials are reluctant to acknowledge the changing economic and social conditions in the county and therefore are unwilling to take action against the rise in substance abuse and addiction in their county.

The response to the growing addiction rate in Clatsop County has been markedly different than in Tillamook County. As noted earlier, Clatsop County has two Drug Courts and in July 2017, the Clatsop County Public Health Department launched a needle exchange program to combat the growing rates of infectious disease among intravenous drug users.

In the Providence Seaside Hospital's survey, a small portion of the population noted needing substance abuse treatment services, but of those who needed it, over 36 percent reported not being able to get all the care they wanted.

Substance Abuse and Addiction Treatment Resources

Clatsop County — There is only one inpatient treatment facility in Seaside, Awakenings at the Sea, which is for women and does not accept uninsured individuals or those covered by Medicaid. Services at the two outpatient treatment centers, Klean and North Coast Recovery, are also not available to uninsured or Medicaid recipients. North Coast Pain Clinic, a project of Columbia Pacific CCO, accepts Medicaid.

“There is not a broad understanding and acceptance that our community is a poverty community and how that contributes to homelessness, substance abuse and mental illness.”

Tillamook CARE Executive Director
Columbia County — All of the treatment options available in Columbia County accept Medicaid. Bridge to Pathways Detox Center provides inpatient care and is part of Columbia Community Mental Health. Revitalize Wellness Center in Scappoose focuses on helping patients learn new methods for managing chronic pain.

Tillamook County — There are no inpatient treatment facilities in Tillamook County. Ivy Avenue Wellness Center’s emphasis is on pain management and is a program of Tillamook Family Counseling Center which sees Medicaid patients. The Rinehart Clinic, a Federally Qualified Medical Center, offers addiction counseling services in Wheeler.

**MENTAL HEALTH**

Mental health is essential to personal well-being, family and interpersonal relationships and the ability to contribute to one’s community.

It is estimated that about 17 percent of U.S. adults are considered to be in a state of optimal mental health. Depression is the most common type of mental illness, affecting more than 26 percent of the United States’ adult population\(^{[12]}\). In addition, alcohol or substance abuse can lead to decreased mental functioning, increased symptoms of mental illness, and result in overall poor performance and lowered quality of life.

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\(^{[12]}\) Community Health Needs Assessment 2013, Adventist Health, Tillamook Regional Medical Center

“We have a pretty serious mental health issue in our community. That seems to be pretty common among those that are also homeless or experiencing other aspects of poverty.”

Clatsop County Administrator
In Clatsop County over 40 percent of respondents in a survey by Providence Seaside Hospital have been diagnosed with a behavioral health condition and 8.2 percent of 11th grade students have attempted suicide one or more times during the past 12 months\(^{13}\).

Across the nation there has been an increase in the rate of suicide. In Oregon from 1999 to 2016, there was a 28.2 percent increase in the suicide rate. Suicide rates are higher in rural areas than in urban areas. The gap in suicide rates between rural and urban areas grew steadily from 1999 to 2015. Since 2007, the gap began widening more quickly\(^{14}\).

Columbia Pacific CCO’s 2014 Community Health Assessment noted that Tillamook County had a
severe shortage of mental health providers. The ratio of mental health providers was 25,267 to one, much less than the ratio of 2,193 to one in Oregon.

Mental health services was the highest-rated need by mothers in the Head Start focus group. Five out of eight participants said they needed mental health counseling. Community leaders ranked mental health in the top four needs. In Clatsop County, nine out of ten community leaders said it was a pressing community need; five out 10 agreed in Tillamook County and in Columbia County four out of 14 mentioned it as a community need.
Mental Health
Treatment Resources

While there are counselors in private practice in each county, many of them do not accept Medicaid/Oregon Health Plan clients. The organizations listed below all accept Medicaid patients.

Clatsop County — Clatsop Behavioral Health is the primary provider of mental health services in Clatsop County. It offers adult outpatient services for both mental health and addiction.

Columbia County — Columbia County Mental Health treats children, individuals and families with behavioral issues. Its Psychiatric Rehabilitation Program serves adults with severe and persistent mental illnesses in an evidence-based program.

Tillamook County — Tillamook Family Counseling Center is a comprehensive behavioral health services provider for children, adults and families. Using a variety of skills, counselors assist clients in learning new strategies for positive outcomes.

“First, if you look at our kids, you’ll see where the needs are. They end up being the damaged goods from dysfunctional families where there are mental health problems or drug and alcohol abuse.”

Tillamook School Superintendent
FOOD SECURITY

The Oregon Center for Public Policy reports that 527,000 Oregonians did not know where their next meal was coming from or went hungry. The report concludes that Oregon has made little progress in recent years in reducing food insecurity, despite a strengthening economy and rising employment\(^\text{15}\).

Without nutritious food, physical and mental health suffers. For children, it can cause greater rates of birth defects, developmental delays and lower educational outcomes.

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Footnote:

15 Oregon Center for Public Policy, May 17, 2018

US Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012-16
A 2015 Oregon Food Bank survey found:

- 36 percent of respondents visit a pantry 12 or more times a year, up from 31 percent in 2012
- 80 percent of respondents said food assistance made it possible to get through the month up from 72 percent in 2012
- 56 percent of households said regular food support helped with their monthly budget
- 55 percent of households said cost is the biggest barrier to eating fruits and vegetables

**Adults with Inadequate Fruit & Vegetable Consumption**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>75.30%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clatsop County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Columbia County</td>
<td>78.80%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tillamook County</td>
<td>71.20%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oregon</td>
<td>73.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>75.70%</td>
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</table>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2005-09
Food Resources

Clatsop County — The county has two food banks. One is part of the regional food bank network and is managed by Clatsop Community Action in Warrenton. CCA distributes food to multiple partner agencies and directly to clients. South County Community Food Bank, located in Seaside, provides food to individuals and families in Seaside, Gearhart and Cannon Beach.

Columbia County — Columbia Pacific Food Bank delivers food to 38 food panties, meal programs and produce distribution points throughout Columbia County.

Tillamook County — The Oregon Food Bank operates the local food bank in Tillamook County and is located in the city of Tillamook.
EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT

EDUCATION

Formal education is an important determinant of individual earnings. Educated workers earn higher wages, have greater employment stability and more upward mobility in income. Education is becoming increasingly important to meet today's job demands.

The U.S. Census Bureau reports poverty rates by educational attainment for people aged 25 and older. In the U.S. in 2014, the overall poverty rate for people 25 and older was 12 percent. For people with a bachelor’s degree or higher it was 5 percent. If individuals had some college but no degree, 10 percent experienced poverty. For individuals with a high school diploma and no college, 14 percent met the poverty definition. If people did not have a high school diploma, 29 percent were in poverty.

A common characteristic of the population, across each county in CAT’s service area, is a lower level of education. Only 21.21 percent of the region's residents
have a bachelor’s or higher degree compared to Oregon at 31.44 percent and the U.S. at 30.32 percent\textsuperscript{16}.

Research shows that the lower the level of education, the greater the chances that people will experience poverty.

\textsuperscript{16} U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey. 2012-16
Tillamook County has the highest number of students who graduate from high school, 76.7 percent, slightly above the state rate of 76.5 percent. Clatsop is the lowest in the region, with 65.5 percent graduating, and Columbia County comes in at 70.1 percent. All counties exceed the United States in fourth grade reading proficiency.
EMPLOYMENT

Although the unemployment rate in the region is historically low, it is not a good indicator of economic stability for families. Many of the workers are in low-paying jobs, and some employment is part-time or seasonal. Of the 40.6 million Americans living in poverty in 2016, 56.1 percent were working-age adults, ages 18-64. Of those living in poverty in the United States, 32.16 percent are children and 11.2 percent are adults over 65 \(^{17}\). Low wages and the low probability of working full-time for a full year in low-wage jobs increase the risk of poverty for workers.

In Clatsop County and to a lesser degree in Tillamook County, the seasonal nature of some tourist-related jobs contributes to the need for public assistance. The absence of living-wage jobs was cited by community leaders during interviews as a factor that helps put people into poverty.

**TRANSPORTATION**

Results from community leader interviews, client focus groups and client surveys, showed that transportation is an issue across the region. In Columbia County, 10 out of 12 community leaders said transportation was a need. Out of 10 interviewed in Tillamook County, six cited transportation. It was further down the list in Clatsop County with four out of 12 identifying transportation as a community need.

“The workforce is not mobile because it’s trapped by lack of transportation.”

Nonprofit Executive Director
Public transportation in the region's rural areas and small towns is inadequate. Limited public transportation creates challenges for residents to access jobs, schools, medical facilities, retail shopping, recreation and other services. The lack of public transportation presents another barrier for obtaining and traveling to work.

**Transportation Resources**

In Clatsop County public transit is available through the Sunset Empire Transportation District providing weekday service between Astoria and Seaside with stops in Gearhart and Warrenton.

The Columbia County Rider ("CC Rider") serves Columbia County residents and visitors with bus service between Clatskanie, Rainier, St. Helens,
Scappoose and Vernonia, including trips to Portland and Kelso/Longview, Washington.

“The Wave,” operates in Tillamook County through the Tillamook County Transportation District. It provides general public dial-a-ride, local routes, intercity and commuter bus services throughout northwest Oregon.

What each of these transit systems share is limited routes and reduced hours of operation during times when many workers need to get to their jobs.
## APPENDIX

### CLIENT FOCUS GROUP RESULTS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Clatsop County</th>
<th>Columbia County</th>
<th>Tillamook County</th>
<th>Head Start Region</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Number of participants</strong></td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<tr>
<td>Food</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
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<td>19</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health Care</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>4</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>Clothing</td>
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<td>Child Care</td>
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# CLIENT SURVEY RESULTS

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<tr>
<th>NEED</th>
<th>Region</th>
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<th>Tillamook County</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># of respondents</td>
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<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
<td>Percent</td>
<td>Number</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>50%</td>
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<td>Food</td>
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<td>38%</td>
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<td>Transportation</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>Energy Assistance</td>
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<td>31</td>
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<td>Health</td>
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<td>29%</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>Employment</td>
<td>15%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income</td>
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<td>17%</td>
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<td>Self-Value</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>12%</td>
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<td>Social Networks</td>
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<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thriving children</td>
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<td>4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
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# COMMUNITY LEADER INTERVIEW RESULTS

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<tr>
<th>Pressing Community Needs</th>
<th>Clatsop County 12 Interviewed</th>
<th>Columbia County 14 Interviewed</th>
<th>Tillamook County 10 Interviewed</th>
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<tr>
<td>Affordable Housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substance Abuse/Addiction</td>
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<td>Jobs</td>
<td>5</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jobs</td>
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<td>Substance Abuse/Addiction</td>
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<td>Childcare</td>
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# Community Leaders

## Community Leader Interviews

### Clatsop County

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Organization</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cameron Moore</td>
<td>County Manager</td>
<td>Clatsop County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Smith</td>
<td>Community Connections Coordinator</td>
<td>Providence Hospital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Van Nostrand</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>Astoria First Presbyterian Church</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alan Evans</td>
<td>CEO</td>
<td>Helping Hands Reentry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nate Long</td>
<td>Branch Operations Manager</td>
<td>DHS Self Sufficiency Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>Debbie Morrow</td>
<td>Board Chair</td>
<td>Warrenton-Hammond School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sheryl Redburn</td>
<td>Director</td>
<td>Hope House, a Lutheran Family Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melissa Johnstone</td>
<td>Clatsop County Program Manager</td>
<td>Northwest Senior and Disability Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Reid</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Astoria-Warrenton Chamber of Commerce</td>
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### Tillamook County

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melissa Carlson-Swanson</td>
<td>Manager</td>
<td>Oregon Food Bank Tillamook Services Branch</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dave Stuck</td>
<td>Coordinator</td>
<td>Tillamook Ecumenical Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>Randy Schild</td>
<td>Superintendent</td>
<td>School District #9</td>
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<td>Bill Baertlein</td>
<td>Commissioner</td>
<td>Tillamook County</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marlene Putman</td>
<td>Administrator</td>
<td>Tillamook County Health Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Beaubein</td>
<td>Senior Director, Stewardship</td>
<td>Tillamook Creamery</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jake Pugh</td>
<td>Program Manager, Tillamook AAA</td>
<td>Northwest Senior and Disability Services</td>
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### Columbia County

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chuck Daughtry</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Columbia County Economic Team</td>
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<tr>
<td>Casey Wheeler</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Columbia Pacific Food Bank</td>
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<tr>
<td>Kathryn Beck</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>United Way of Columbia County</td>
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<td>Henry Heimuller</td>
<td>County Commissioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nadine Rotter</td>
<td>Assistant Pastor</td>
<td>Foursquare Church</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donna Rosenbach</td>
<td>Customer Accounts Representative</td>
<td>Columbia River PUD</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jennifer Bartocci</td>
<td>Homeless Liaison</td>
<td>St. Helens School District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cindy Jaeger</td>
<td>Service Center Administrator</td>
<td>NW Regional Educational Service District</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tony Hyde</td>
<td>Former County Commissioner</td>
<td>Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Molly Cooke</td>
<td>Pastor</td>
<td>Foursquare Church</td>
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<td>Myronida Schilding</td>
<td>Career Technical Education STEM</td>
<td>NW Regional Educational Service District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martha Ominstead</td>
<td>Former CAT housing staff</td>
<td>Retired</td>
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### Region

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Position</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nancy Knopf</td>
<td>Community Health Partnership Manager</td>
<td>Columbia Pacific Coordinated Care Organization</td>
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<td>Jim Tierney</td>
<td>Former CAT Executive Director</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jorge Gutierrez</td>
<td>Executive Director</td>
<td>Lower Columbia Hispanic Council</td>
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