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Jackson County Advances Youth Substance Use Prevention Work with Year 2 Grant Funding

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Jackson County is continuing important work to support the health and well-being of local youth. Jackson County Public Health (JCPH) has received Year 2 funding of a federal youth substance use prevention grant, allowing the county to move forward with prevention efforts informed by a recent community assessment.

Over the past year, JCPH partnered with the Grand County Rural Health Network (GCRHN) to implement a comprehensive community engagement and assessment process focused on youth substance use in Jackson County. GCRHN led on-the-ground outreach and engagement efforts, working closely with community members to gather input and elevate local voices. The assessment included a stakeholder meeting, key informant interviews, a youth conversation, and a community survey. The time and insight shared by community members were essential, and the findings will be actively used to guide next steps.

The assessment highlighted many community strengths, including caring adults, strong youth programs, and a close-knit rural community. At the same time, residents expressed a desire for more healthy, positive activities for youth and families, particularly alcohol free options. Many participants noted that adult behavior and role modeling play an important role in shaping youth norms, and that families want more support to engage in open, honest conversations with young people. Overall, the findings demonstrated both deep community care for youth and a readiness to work together on solutions.

This work is already making a difference. Through Year 1 of the grant, JCPH and GCRHN distributed more than \$30,000 in funding to 16 local youth groups, including sports teams, 4 H, clubs, and other youth-focused organizations. These mini grants

strengthened existing programs that provide safe, positive, and supportive environments for youth and families across Jackson County.

“GCRHN is proud to partner with Jackson County Public Health to help translate community input into meaningful, practical prevention strategies that support youth, families, and the broader community,” said Amanda Uehlein, Executive Director of Grand County Rural Health Network. “We are grateful to have the opportunity to continue this effort into Year 2.”

With Year 2 funding, the county will continue turning assessment findings into action. Planned activities include building a community based prevention coalition, continuing to engage youth and families, supporting healthy and alcohol free activities, and sharing clear, positive messages about community values and expectations. With continued federal funding, this effort is designed to grow over time and will remain grounded in community leadership and participation.

“This work is for the community and by the community,” said Marcie Clendenen, Deputy Public Health Director. “The information shared through this assessment will not sit on a shelf. It will guide real action to help Jackson County youth feel supported, connected, and able to thrive.”

Linked to this work, North Park School District is hosting a community movie night featuring *Screenagers*, a film that explores the challenges young people face around screen time, social media, and mental health. The event will take place at the Elkhorn from 6:30–8:00 p.m. and is open to community members, parents, and caregivers. The film offers a shared starting point for conversations about how adults can support healthy development in today’s world.

Community members who are interested in learning more or getting involved in the ongoing youth substance use prevention initiative are invited to attend a Prevention Coalition Kick-Off Meeting on Wednesday, February 25, tentatively scheduled from 6:30–8:00 p.m. Location TBD. At this meeting, participants will hear a summary of the assessment findings, learn about the general direction of prevention efforts for the coming year, and explore different ways to be involved. Attending this meeting does not commit individuals to ongoing coalition participation.

For more information or to express interest, please contact Jen Fanning, Consultant, at 970-531-7887 or jfanning7680@gmail.com.

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About:

Jackson County Public Health works to protect and improve the health of Jackson County residents through prevention, education, and collaboration. JCPH promotes

healthy behaviors and supports community conditions that help individuals and families thrive.

Grand County Rural Health Network is a nonprofit health alliance working to improve access to care and advance health equity in Northwest Colorado. GCRHN partners with communities, providers, and public agencies to develop community driven solutions that strengthen health and well being across the lifespan.

Peak Strategy Solutions is a public health consulting firm specializing in strategy, facilitation, and community-driven assessment. Peak Strategy supports rural and frontier communities through inclusive engagement, data driven analysis, and practical planning and implementation support.