



SEBASTOPOL COMMUNITY NEEDS SUMMIT

SUMMIT PROGRAM



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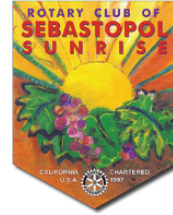
THE CITY OF SEBASTOPOL

May 12, 2021
4:00-7:30 pm



Sebastopol
Vitality Project

Service Organization Council



Sebastopol
Vitality Project

www.comission.group/sebastopol

The Summit Program

The Summit will begin with opening remarks from our Sebastopol Mayor Una Glass. Our Emcee for the evening is Councilmember Diana Rich. Hal Kwalwasser from the Rotary Club of Sebastopol will be presenting an overview, after which there will be four panels addressing needs in our community. Panelists will share with participants their perspective on community needs associated with that panel’s subject matter, what is currently being done to address those needs, and what our community members can do to help meet those needs. Councilmembers Neysa Hinton and Patrick Slayter will introduce each panel. Vice Mayor Sarah Glade Gurney will be closing out the event and offering ways for people to get involved.

The panels will take place in sequence, so anyone on the Zoom meeting will have a chance to hear all of them. Audience members can also sign on for particular panels if they so choose.

The event will have the “chat” mode enabled, so that participants can share their questions and can have access to links and information that will be posted as the Summit progresses.

Thank you for showing how much you care about Sebastopol and West County by taking the time to join us in this process!

Table of Contents

The Summit Program	3
Statement of Purpose	5
Community Needs Survey Overview	7
In Conclusion	10

Statement of Purpose

In early 2021, the service organizations in Sebastopol and West County were facing a dilemma. They were being overwhelmed with requests from community organizations for help on a wide range of issues. Many of these issues stemmed from our recent natural disasters or the Covid-19 pandemic. The demands were greater than the local service organizations could possibly meet.

These community organizations needed a broader view. They needed to see the whole spectrum of needs confronting their neighbors in Sebastopol and the West County, and they needed to see who was dealing with them most effectively. Only then could they make better decisions about where to focus their efforts for the greatest good. The service clubs also understood that this broader view would help West County residents make better decisions about how and where they might get better involved to address community needs.

The desire to create a succinct needs profile for our community led to the organization of the Community Needs Summit. The Summit is comprised of two community engagement actions:

1. First, the service clubs and the City of Sebastopol sent out over 100 surveys to community organizations that are dealing with a broad range of community issues, including among others: homelessness, food insecurity, the environment, and mental health. The responses are summarized in the [Sebastopol Guide to Nonprofits & Service Organizations](#).
2. Second, a portion of the survey takers from various organizations in the community were identified as community representatives who were invited to participate in the Community Needs Summit as facilitators or panelists. During the Summit, panelists will field questions from the facilitators regarding the challenges faced in the community and the resources needed to further their visions of helping others.

Our end goal is simple: Our community needs help. We hope the Summit makes everyone who participates more motivated to pitch in and lend a helping hand.

Through this process, we hope to get a clear understanding of our community's needs and what each of us can do to meet those needs.



COMMUNITY NEEDS SUMMIT PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY, MAY 12, 4:00 - 7:30 PM

4:00 pm -
4:10 pm

WELCOME

Mayor Una Glass "[City of Sebastopol](#)"
Councilmember Diana Rich "[City of Sebastopol](#)"

4:10 pm -
4:20 pm

OPENING REMARKS

Hal Kwalwasser "[Summit Co-Chair](#)"

4:25 pm -
5:15 pm

SESSION 1: FOOD & HOUSING

Facilitators: Cathryn Couch "[Ceres Community Project](#)"
Laura Shafer "[The Grange Sebastopol](#)"

Speakers: Arthur George "[West County Homeless Advocates](#)," Herman J. Hernandez "[Los Cien Latino Leaders of Sonoma County](#)," Ron Karp "[Food for Thought](#)," Tim Miller "[West County Community Services](#)," Adrienne Lauby "[Sonoma Applied Village Services](#)"

5:20 pm -
6:10 pm

SESSION 2: MENTAL HEALTH & SCHOOLS

Facilitators: Hal Kwalwasser "[Rotary Club of Sebastopol](#)"
David Mark-Raymond "[Sebastopol Sunrise Rotary](#)"

Speakers: Shauna Ferdinandson "[Analy High School](#)," Brooke Ransom-Burr "[Social Advocates For Youth](#)," Elizabeth Smith "[Sonoma County PACes](#),"
David Rose "[Gravenstein School District](#)," Renee Semik "[Forestville School District](#)"

6:15 pm -
6:45 pm

SESSION 3: ENVIRONMENT

Facilitators: Evert Fernandez "[Small Business Development Center](#)"
Woody Hastings "[Climate Action Committee](#)"

Speakers: Dr. Wendy Trowbridge "[Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation](#),"
Sunny Galbraith "[Zero Waste Committee](#)," Ariel Majorana "[Russian Riverkeeper](#)"

6:50 pm -
7:20 pm

SESSION 4: COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT

Facilitators: Jim Corbett "[Mr. Music Foundation](#)"
Meg Mizutani "[Sebastopol World Friends](#)"

Speakers: Teresa Ramondo "[Western Sonoma County Historical Society](#)," Katie Davis "[Sebastopol Senior Center](#)," Philena Chantha "[Sebastopol Community Cultural Center](#),"
Catherine Devriese "[Sebastopol Center for the Arts](#)"

7:20 pm -
7:30 pm

CLOSING

Vice Mayor Sarah Glade Gurney "[City of Sebastopol](#)"

Community Needs Survey Overview

The coalition of service clubs and the City of Sebastopol received sixty-five responses to the survey sent to nonprofits and others in the Sebastopol and West Sonoma County area.

This overview of the data is an attempt to synthesize what all the responding organizations told us. As you will see, there is no way by which we could rank the needs as “more” or “less” important than others, but we believe there is enough information available to give you a good idea of what needs to be done and how current efforts can be improved. It is for you to decide what you want to do based on those facts.

We’ve tried to sort the responses by the principal issues we have seen in the discussions. Please see our Guide of Sebastopol Non-profits’ Needs for reference to the groups who work on the following:

- Advertising
- Art & Music
- Business Development
- Career Development
- Childhood development
- Cultural Enrichment
- Dental Care
- Education
- Environment
- Eye care
- Faith
- Food Security
- Health Care
- Homelessness / Housing
- Mental Health
- Safety
- Senior Support
- Sports & Recreation
- Sustainable agriculture
- Equity & Inclusion
- Youth

A few responses may have raised other questions, but it is clear that the vast amount of community activity can be included in one of the twenty-one categories.

Please see our [Sebastopol Guide to Nonprofits & Service Organizations](#) for a complete list of all organizations who responded.

There are many issues to discuss. We cannot cover them all right away. Please see the following sections which summarize the topics we are able to explore in this Sebastopol Summit.

Mental Health

There is a strong need for mental health services in Sebastopol and West County. Some of the need is clearly long-standing, but there is no doubt that it has been exacerbated by the pressures of the pandemic. The issue affects a broad range of people, from young children to seniors, a fact reflected in the wide range of organizations that told us they have specific programs to deal with these challenges.

For example, the Gravenstein and Forestville School Districts are both focused on student mental health. On top of the usual issues of bullying, isolation and child abuse, there are now

the compounding factors of family economic hardship and loss of homes. Forestville wants to create mental health and wrap-around health care services for its children. Gravenstein has begun working with Gravenstein Health Action, where one of its key objectives is mental health. However, neither district currently has sufficient money, and, even if Forestville did, it needs community partners who have the expertise to deliver the care. In addition, the Sebastopol Community Cultural Center is trying to build out a Teen Center, for which it needs both money and volunteers.

On the other end of the age spectrum, the Sebastopol Area Senior Center is trying to deal with senior isolation, a problem made much worse by Covid restrictions. It runs a “phone buddy” program and a free ride operation that address the worst aspects of the isolation. That requires volunteers and some money, particularly until the threat of Covid subsides.

Housing and Homelessness

There is a significant housing problem in Sebastopol. While some people are totally unsheltered, there are several challenges around people living in their cars or RVs. Among these questions are safe parking, showers and food, as well as broader efforts to find them permanent housing.

Housing and mental health intersect, particularly for homeless students. “Studying from home” is a difficult concept when someone does not really have a home. And when a youth has no family, the same issues cascade into a further range of problems, such as drug use and sexual exploitation – all of which burden our local school districts and organizations like West County Community Services.

This issue clearly has struck a chord with local institutions. The Community Church provides safe parking for five families, and it wants to build housing for the homeless. Along with the Christian Church, it participates in Saturday Table, which provides meals to people in need, especially the homeless. For these projects, it needs \$5000 to erect two Conestoga Huts, and partners and volunteers who will provide services to those who are either parking at the church or living in the huts.

Food Insecurity

There is good news and bad news on the issue of food insecurity. The bad news is that during this economic downturn, more people have needed help securing food than ever before. The good news is that we have three organizations that have stepped up to meet the need: The Redwood Empire Food Bank, Ceres, and Food for Thought. Among them, they serve several thousand needy people in Sonoma County, many of which are in West County.

Both Ceres and Food for Thought are looking to expand. To do that, they will need significant amounts of money and additional volunteers. Redwood Empire Food Bank has a constant need for volunteers at its warehouse, as it now works with 170 other groups.

In addition to the food banks, several churches and other organizations in Sebastopol and West County distribute food. The Community Church, St. Stephen's and the Methodist Church work together on the Food Pantry. The Sebastopol Union School District and both Rotary clubs provide a program with free food to the district's students who are food insecure.

Environment

Local environmental issues have not significantly changed since Covid, but the lockdowns and social distancing requirements have cut down the number of volunteers the organizations have been able to draw to assist in their work. The Laguna de Santa Rosa Foundation is committed to the preservation of the Laguna, but it is worried about trash and garbage, unauthorized homeless encampments, and a general lack of awareness of what needs to be done to maintain this valuable resource. They need volunteers for all sorts of projects.

LandPaths reaches approximately 6000 people a year to increase access to nature, fight climate change and build in wildfire resiliency. The organization runs a summer camp for nature education programs and needs to restore 2800 acres of its land burned during the fires last year. For both projects it needs money and volunteers.

The Sebastopol City Council Zero Waste Committee's goal is to reduce waste going to a landfill. Most of its work focuses on education, but it needs volunteers to help staff compost and recycling centers at events. There are a number of other environmental organizations doing great work. You can read about them in the [Sebastopol Guide to Nonprofits & Service Organizations](#).

Schools

Schools are grappling with all sorts of challenges. The most obvious has been distance learning brought on by Covid restrictions. However, on top of that, those schools that responded to the survey noted problems with mental health, food insecurity, abuse, and homelessness. Several districts talked about a lessening of parental support for the schools and could use volunteers and money to help deliver all these needed services.

The high school district has a variety of challenges now. One that was highlighted in the survey responses was a lack of business partners who could help students by creating internships where they could learn necessary soft skills and the fundamentals of various businesses and trades. One particular issue is the North Bay Construction Corps, which the Sebastopol Rotary brought to West County in 2020 to give high school seniors an introduction to the construction

industry. The program elsewhere in the county is supported by a foundation grant that will soon run out, and the Rotary's commitment at present runs for only another year.

The high school's fiscal constraints are limiting more than its vocational programs. The Analy Band Wagon is currently negotiating to provide music education, with a new program set for fall 2021. However, there are issues with money that need to be resolved.

Some districts are trying to move ahead. Harmony is trying to fund a new cafeteria and garden. The project will cost \$150,000. Given the pressure many of its families have been under, it could use volunteer help and donations.

Community Affairs

Sebastopol is truly a community. Its people live here and work here. There is a community spirit that makes possible things like this summit, which is based on the belief that there are lots of people willing to make supporting good works in town a priority. Some of the survey responders are organizations that promote that spirit.

The Chamber of Commerce is down to one paid employee; it needs volunteer help to deliver its full range of services to its members. The Downtown Association, whose goal is to keep downtown attractive and vibrant, also needs volunteer help.

The Historical Society, the West County Museum and the Luther Burbank Farm are now re-opening and need volunteers, especially the Farm, which needs work to make up for a lack of maintenance during Covid.

The Library needs to expand; ironically, in the time of Covid in the Internet Era, the library has found itself playing a key role in the community. It needs space, and it needs volunteers.

The Mr. Music Foundation sponsors the summer Peacetown concerts and provides music teachers for elementary schools. It, too, needs donations and volunteers.

These are not all the challenges, programs or organizations reflected on the surveys. Please listen to the entire summit to find out about all the opportunities to serve our community.

In Conclusion

Thank you for participating in today's Community Needs Summit!

It is important to note that if a particular panel raises issues that you think are worthwhile, we encourage you to review the complete list of organizations that work on that problem. In most cases, the panel could only showcase a portion of all the relevant organizations. The other providers who work in the area offer lots of meaningful opportunities as well. Please review the Guide of [Sebastopol Guide to Nonprofits & Service Organizations](#) to learn more!