Notes from the Field
Nutritious Food, Physical Activity, and Healthy Communities
By Alex Arroyo

The Olympic Peninsula Healthy Community Coalition began as a grassroots project in 2015 between the Olympic Community View Foundation and the Sequim Food Bank. They seek to promote ‘Healthy Living’ and a ‘Healthy Community’ through ‘Healthy Partnerships.’

The Olympic Community View Foundation funded a grant request by the Sequim Food Bank to survey its clients and meet with community stakeholders. The groups sought to evaluate how effectively the Food Bank was promoting health and wellness within their community.

Andra Smith, Executive Director of the Sequim Food Bank, also wanted to determine whether there was energy to convene to work on communal concerns and share resources. “We found that Community leaders were interested in sharing with others, and our first meeting was held in April 2015 with a handful of community representatives. The group was eager to work together, and began to develop project ideas to integrate their missions and resources while helping the Sequim-Dungeness Valley become a healthier place to live.” Thus, the Olympic Peninsula Healthy Community Coalition was born!

The group promotes multiple aspects that make a community vibrant and sustainable: Healthy Living, a Healthy Community, and Healthy Partnerships. The Coalition facilitates both a healthy diet and active lifestyles for their residents through hosting local food events and participating in the ‘Ready, Set, Go! 5210’ initiative, a nationally recognized childhood obesity prevention program begun in Maine and now in 37 states, as well as Pierce and Kitsap counties in Washington state.

Through a monthly blog, Dr. Monica Dixon shares stories of success from around their community. She highlights how the Nourish Restaurant manages to provide such wonderful food from gardens right outside the restaurant; how Dungeness Valley Health and Wellness Clinic successfully maximizes every penny of a dollar to provide health care to the most needy; how the Boys and Girl’s Club manages to capture the attention of the “big shots in D.C.” with their USDA Summer Food Program; and how our Sequim Food Bank has connected across the Olympic Peninsula to feed the hungry.
The Coalition partners with schools, child care and out-of-school programs, healthcare practices and community organizations to change environments where children and families live, learn work and play. These partnerships have been vital to the Coalition’s efforts to create a local atmosphere and ethos that promotes healthy, active, and intentional lives for the community. As the group says on their website (www.healthyop.org): “Real, sustainable community change can only come about by dedicated community members, elected officials, grassroots organizers, businesses and a wide variety of non-profits working together to develop local solutions.”

For more information about starting or developing your farm-to-food bank initiative, please email growingconnections@northwestharvest.org, or contact Laura Titzer at 206.923.7423