



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 29, 2016

Contact: Steve Maher, Our Valley project coordinator, (509) 630-2090 or info@ourvalleyourfuture.org

Our Valley, Our Future to release community-shaped plan to improve region

WENATCHEE — Our Valley, Our Future / Nuestro Valle, Nuestro Futuro will release its first Vision and Action Plan at a luncheon Wednesday at the Wenatchee Convention Center.

The Vision and Action Plan — approximately 15 months in the making and developed from input from thousands of residents — includes 149 projects and programs and seven major “game-changer” projects spread out over six focus areas (economy and jobs; land use, growth and transportation; the environment and outdoor recreation; health care, social services and public safety; education and arts and culture; community engagement, governance and decision-making).

The projects and programs are being led by 81 public agencies, businesses, nonprofit organizations and community groups. The lead partners have committed to championing and implementing the actions within a five-year period. By working on these projects, the partner organizations share responsibility in bringing Our Valley's long-term, grassroots vision to fruition.

“Our Valley's intent, from its start to now, has been to tap into what residents desire and make this place we call home better for all,” said Steve Maher, Our Valley coordinator. “By working together, by arriving at common solutions and by continually striving for improvement, we can prosper as a region and make it an amazing place to live, work and play for generations to come.”

Keynote speakers during Wednesday's luncheon, which begins at 11:30 a.m., are Wenatchee World publisher Rufus Woods and El Mundo editor Gustavo Montoya. The two will deliver a shared speech on the importance of community collaboration.

In addition, Our Valley will make a major announcement during the luncheon involving the initiative and its lead partners.

It is the first time an initiative of this magnitude has been undertaken across multi-jurisdictional boundaries in Chelan and Douglas counties. The name, Our Valley, Our Future, was chosen to reflect this approach.

In January, Our Valley's third phase — the implementation phase — will begin as lead partners incorporate the projects into their work plans. Our Valley will incorporate a metrics/indicators system to measure progress of the projects and then report back to the community. Our Future also will serve as a facilitator, planner, advocate and communicator during the third phase. The initiative's first phase was the community outreach work in 2015. This year's second phase was developing the Vision and Action Plan.

Our Valley was started in 2014 by a small group of community leaders inspired by a TEDx Conference in Wenatchee and driven by a desire to tackle big challenges facing the region — a restructuring economy, lagging wages, threats from catastrophic wildfires, rising poverty levels and a growing housing crisis.

In 2015, Our Valley initiated a conversation with the entire community, asking thousands of residents what they saw as the region's core values, biggest strengths and weaknesses, and challenges. This dialogue was accomplished through interviews with community leaders, public surveys, presentations to local organizations, public open houses, and workshops for the wider community. All of the information and ideas obtained from Our Valley residents was collected, compiled and analyzed.

This extensive outreach effort enabled Our Valley to develop the building blocks of a long-term vision and action plan centered around the six focus areas. During the first nine months of 2016, Our Valley's citizen-based Action Teams, a Think Tank of community leaders, and the Our Valley Core Team — totaling more than 150 residents and community leaders — researched, vetted and refined the actions and major projects. They also secured commitments from the businesses, public agencies, nonprofits and community groups that will champion the plan's actions and major projects.

Members of the Our Valley steering committee include Lori Barnett, City of East Wenatchee; Norma Gallegos, Hand-In-Hand Immigration Services; Steve King, City of Wenatchee; Stacy Luckensmeyer, Wenatchee Valley College; Shayne Madoff, East Wenatchee resident; Gustavo Montoya, El Mundo newspaper; Lisa Parks, Port of Douglas County; Sara Rolfs, The Wildfire Project; Steve Sandman, Frontier Communications; Shiloh Schauer, Wenatchee Valley Chamber of Commerce; Gil Sparks, Community Foundation of NCW; Alan Walker, United Way of Chelan and Douglas Counties; Jeff Wilkens, Chelan-Douglas Transportation Council; and Allison Williams, City of Wenatchee.

Our Valley's fiscal sponsor is the United Way of Chelan and Douglas Counties.

For more on Our Valley, Our Future:

Website — <http://www.ourvalleyourfuture.org>

Facebook — <https://www.facebook.com/onevalleyonecommunity/>

Email — info@ourvalleyourfuture.org

###