



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Residents to start shaping future of 'Our Valley' this Saturday

WENATCHEE — Residents will begin crafting a long-range vision, initiatives and projects for the Wenatchee Valley area at a community summit from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. this Saturday at Pybus Public Market.

The summit is being put on by "Our Valley What's Next/Nuestro Valle Que Sigue," a local group that formed earlier this year to help the community develop a values-based vision for the next 20 years as part of the nationwide America's Best Communities contest. The Wenatchee Valley is one of 50 quarterfinalists in the contest.

Our Valley What's Next is led by the United Way of Chelan and Douglas Counties, with assistance from a diverse group of nonprofit, business, civic and government entities that has grown to more than 50 partners.

At Saturday's summit, results from a community survey will be released and attendees will divide up into smaller groups to discuss community aspirations and to brainstorm 'easy win' projects and major initiatives. That information will then be turned into an action plan for implementation by local partner organizations.

The event, which is part of Make a Difference Day, is free and open to the general public. A light lunch will be served.

"The end goal is to learn what residents value and want for the future of Our Valley and then to translate that — beginning with this Saturday's vision summit — into real projects and initiatives," said Alan Walker, executive director of the United Way of Chelan and Douglas Counties. "To help get us to this point, we have spent many hours gathering input through community meetings, a survey and social media, and then compiling and analyzing that information."

The Our Valley What's Next process is based on a visioning model driven by four main. Those questions, which were part of the community survey, are:

1) What is one thing you value most about living in Our Valley? 2) What is one way you see Our Valley changing now? 3) What is one vision idea you have for the future of Our Valley? 4) What is one action that would make your vision idea happen?

More than 1,300 people have completed the survey since mid-September. Among the findings:

— Residents value most the valley's natural environment, quality of life, cultural diversity, small-town feel, inexpensive public power and agriculture heritage.

— Residents see the valley changing in numerous ways, including population growth, an emerging Latino community, a move toward a recreation economy, a shortage of affordable housing, increasing threats from wildfires, and job and wage issues.

— Among the vision ideas suggested by survey respondents: A four-year college or university; greater collaboration between cultures; consolidation of local governments and agencies; more trails, trailheads and other outdoor recreation infrastructure; more riverfront development; and the improvement of neighborhoods, districts and streets.

— Approximately 23 percent of the respondents identified themselves as being of Hispanic, Latino or Spanish origin.

"Following this Saturday's vision summit, we will continue to engage citizens as we fine-tune the vision, action plan and implementation strategy," Walker said. "Other cities and communities that have undertaken this process have become more prosperous and vibrant as they have completed short-term and long-term projects. We fully expect the same to occur here in Our Valley."

For more on Our Valley What's Next: <http://www.ourvalleywhatsnext.com/>

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