

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SHERIDAN – The Center for a Vital Community (CVC) at Sheridan College hosted an Action Forum, the culmination of five weeks of Study Circles focused on supporting Middle Schoolers, on Wednesday, March 12, at the Hub. Over 75 people attended the event to learn what major initiatives came from the ten Circles, held from January 27 to March 2, 2025, throughout Sheridan County, including Ranchester and Clearmont. Sheridan Junior High and Clearmont Junior-Senior High also hosted in-school student Circles.

Thanks to the work of over 80 Circle facilitators and participants, several common themes were identified from the groups' action items. From there, organizers narrowed them down to five initiatives in Sheridan and several that were Tongue River Valley and Clearmont-focused, all announced at the Action Forum. Attendees had the opportunity to sign up for the first meeting of each initiative to learn more.

CVC Director Amy Albrecht said, "Hearing the middle schoolers themselves echo the conclusions the community members reached in their own Circles was powerful. And seeing so many people show up for our youth is encouraging. I'm excited to watch these initiatives come to fruition."

This complete list is available on the CVC's website at sheridancvc.org/community-initiatives. Anyone wanting to be involved in an initiative may contact the CVC at cvc@sheridan.edu or (307) 675-0831.

The initiatives are as follows:

A Third Place

Middle schoolers crave togetherness, purpose, and belonging. They want unstructured time to try new things, relax, explore, and meet other kids. The concept of a Third Place is somewhere safe that is neither home nor school. Volunteer opportunities, skill-building workshops, mentoring potential, and even inter-generational talent sharing could exist. This could be an existing location (like the Hub or the YMCA) or a different, undetermined place.

Transportation

Since middle schoolers are too young to drive, their ability to access after-school activities, sports, clubs, and other opportunities that happen outside school hours is severely

limited. They can only travel to destinations on foot, and often, those routes are heavily trafficked and potentially dangerous. Creative and safe transportation solutions are needed after activities/sports end in the late afternoon and to and from locations around the community that middle schoolers could enjoy.

Sheridan County Youth Coalition

Establishing a community coalition, including youth, who want to support middle schoolers. The coalition will provide a framework to connect ideas and resources to make an impact on issues critical to their success collectively. Those issues include:

- Mentoring
- Leadership
- Peer support
- Communication
- Community Engagement
- Funding to support activities

SJHS

- A third place: safe spaces that provide choices and independence but with adults around
- Middle schoolers, especially 6th graders, want to have volunteer opportunities and/or get a job
- More consistent, affordable community activities that are open and interesting to youth
- Transportation
- Improving communication around activities that are affordable, fun, and available to all students
- Better opportunities to communicate with counselors about needs and concerns
- Spend a day with a 5th grader and have them experience life at the junior high
- Opportunities to try out sports and other activities

Tongue River Valley

- Listen to the students and ask what they want, possibly via a weekly, in-school poll
 - Summer camps
 - Clubs
- Transportation between Dayton & Rancheater, especially on Fridays. Possibly transportation into the YMCA pool on Fridays.
- Strengthening community connections by tapping into intergenerational opportunities. Find local volunteers:

- Pep band
- Pickleball club
- Mentoring opportunities

Clearmont

The community members have started a coalition and one of their first endeavors is creating a Third Place through the Clearmont Rec District and adding an escape room kit. They're investigating potential access to public property for outdoor recreation and plan to host two fun paddle party summer gatherings.

The middle schoolers want more opportunities to hang out together outside school and want to make sure it's led and run by middle schoolers, focusing on outdoor activities. They've also brainstormed a variety of clubs they might start.