

Dear Lewis County

We are so grateful for all of the love, care, and adaptability our community has demonstrated during these past 8 months of hardship that this pandemic has brought to our community, businesses, families and children. We know this experience has impacted everyone differently. Through this, one thing has become clear: human beings are social creatures, and we need each other in order to flourish. In isolation, we have seen increases in hopelessness, fear, anger, addictions, and a myriad of other concerns. Many of our local children and families are in crisis. Lewis County has observed increases in emergency department visits for mental health concerns and increases in suicide attempts.

Lewis County has a unique opportunity to rally around the children and families in our community. We have emerged as a leader in a solutions-based approach to returning students to different levels of in-person learning while mitigating the risk to school staff and the community during this pandemic. Since students have been returning to in person learning, there has not been an increase in school related transmission of coronavirus. We are however, seeing an exponential increase in community transmission of the virus. Hospitals and health care providers in our own community, are being stretched to capacity, not just in terms of bed space and medical supplies, but in terms of personnel to staff shifts, and caregivers' levels of emotional and physical fatigue.

While it has been our privilege to attend to the medical, mental health, safety concerns, educational needs, food insecurity, housing and employment needs of our community, we cannot overcome these challenges without a concerted effort from ALL community members and leaders.

We plead with you to please join our team in making children and their families a priority. People need to maintain the recommended precautions for masking, social distancing, and curtailing social gatherings so that we can decrease virus transmission. Only when the community acts together can children and families in Lewis County experience hope that schools can remain in person, hobbies can resume, businesses can remain open, and we can decrease isolation and hopelessness.

We, the undersigned endorse this message:

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