



September 23, 2021

On behalf of UC-VEG, I'd like to share a letter of support for the Thundering Water Outdoor Recreation Center.

Considering the historically, comprehensively poor state of Douglas County's health, we are in desperate need of effective intervention. As a local, grassroots, non-profit, UC-VEG has been providing nutrition and lifestyle education throughout Douglas County, free of charge, for over 10 years. Through our work with thousands of people within the community, we've seen how health transformations, including the reversal of disease, are possible through simple lifestyle changes.

We believe education is only a part of the battle and subscribe to the statement that "you can't put a changed person in an unchanged environment"...and expect continuity or positive outcomes. Creating spaces that cultivate, support, and nudge it's patrons toward healthy behaviors is critical. Thundering Water will foster social connectedness, improve the quality of life for its patrons, encourages physical activity, recreation and economic development opportunities, increase property values in the West Harvard area, and exhibit a myriad of healthy behaviors including consuming plant-based foods, incorporating movement, connecting with neighbors and community members, and putting loved ones first.

Through our programs, UC-VEG has been able to see some of these benefits first hand and we're eager to see efforts augmented and expanded across the community. The Lifestyle & Nutrition Course has seen thousands of participants transform their health, with a consistent participant decrease in cholesterol, HbA1c markers, weight, and waist circumference, and consistent increase in kidney function, participant attested increases in energy, mobility, and improved mood. In-person offerings of the Lifestyle & Nutrition Course require a space that can serve an audience of 100 people, with an adjacent cooking demonstration area and storage closet. UC-VEG would be pleased to host the Course at Thundering Water, to station the Loan Library there, to host cooking classes, and to use the location as a pickup site for Veggie Rx Vouchers. If a small office space is available, UC-VEG can also locate a staff member at Thundering Waters to provide onsite nutrition education and to receive community members interested in utilizing the Loan Library.

As the Thundering Water Board explores opportunities for the recreation center, please be assured that UC-VEG will do our part to help these efforts find success and longevity to the extent we are capable.

With the work of Thrive Umpqua, formerly Blue Zones Project-Umpqua, our efforts over the past 10 years, and many other community organizations, we hope that Thundering Water will take us one step closer to mitigating some of the gaps in well-being within our community. Furthermore, we believe that this collaboration will inspire further integration amongst health and community-oriented organizations and work to secure the ability for members of our community to live long, healthy, happy lives.

Thank you for the opportunity to support this effort.

Sincerely,

Juliete Palenshus

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UC-VEG Executive Director