RURAL ORGANIZING PROJECT

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

FOSTERING STRONG AND HEALTHY GROUPS, BUILDING RURAL LEADERSHIP, DEFENDING HUMAN DIGNITY AND ADVANCING DEMOCRACY FOR ALL

BUILDING COMMUNITY DURING A PANDEMIC

The coronavirus, economic recession and devastating wildfires exposed the gaps in social safety nets that leave rural communities without reliable access to emergency resources, food, housing, healthcare, childcare, internet and more. Rural Oregonians built dozens of **mutual aid networks** to feed neighbors, share health and safety information and make sure anyone who needs help gets it.

In response to requests from our partners around town, ROP's **Community Building Center** on Main Street in Cottage Grove turned into a resource sharing hub. We coordinated with dozens of service agencies, school district workers, faith communities and volunteers to make sure families struggling from layoffs and housing shortages, quarantining through COVID-19 and evacuating wildfires could get food boxes, hygiene supplies and hot meals with no questions asked, no limits and no barriers.

We Ended the Last Jail Contract with ICE in Oregon. After 3 years of organizing led by detained people, Columbia Gorge organizers, and dozens of other groups acting in solidarity across the state, we built enough people power to end the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) contract at the Northern Oregon Regional Correctional Facility (NORCOR), a public jail. Two hunger strikes led by people detained inside NORCOR demanding an end to inhumane treatment, a march, hundreds of solidarity rallies and thousands of neighbor-to-neighbor conversations paved the way for the NORCOR Board to vote unanimously to end the jail's contract with ICE in August!

BREAKING RURAL ISOLATION

Through virtual gatherings, ROP brought together hundreds of rural community leaders and human dignity groups to share strategies, cross-pollinate ideas and support one another. We held our 29th annual **Rural Caucus & Strategy Session** online and have hosted 17 strategy sessions with 800 participants, ranging in topics from Creating a Culture of Safety & Security (during violent backlash at Black Lives Matter demonstrations across the state) to Rural Mutual Aid & Wildfire Response.

Growing the Movement for Black Lives: Rural Oregonians gathered on street corners, in churches, parks and in car caravans to hold vigil for the Black and brown people killed by police. ROP supported long-time and emerging groups to form leadership teams, plan actions and create safety and security plans rooted in our values of community care. Clackamas County organizers focused that newfound energy into banning Confederate flags from school grounds, folks in Union County focused on expanding alternatives to policing and leaders in Harney County are creating a monument to the first Black ranchers in their community.

From strategy sessions and hundreds of one-on-one conversations with leaders across rural Oregon came the **Roadmap to a Thriving Rural Oregon**, which outlines the priorities our communities need to move from barely surviving to thriving. The Roadmap connects the dots between organizing happening across our network's 83 autonomous groups so we can move together to ensure all rural Oregonians have what we need, including broadband internet, childcare, housing, healthy food, clean water and much more!

DEFENDING DEMOCRACY

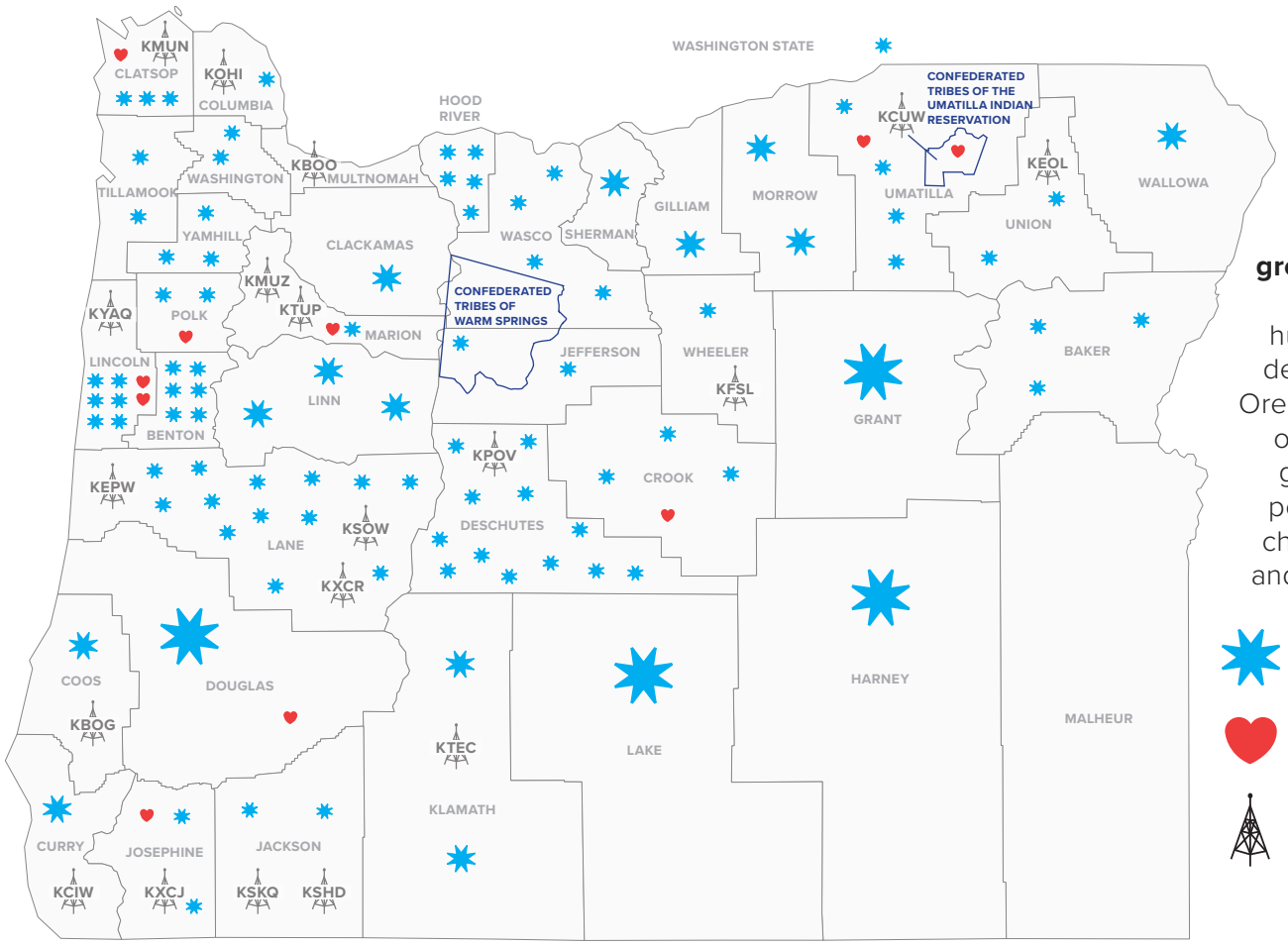
From neighbor-to-neighbor conversations about the issues to responding to voter intimidation, rural Oregonians have defended democracy in every county at every turn! **ROP launched the Defend Democracy initiative** to counter disinformation about who can vote and how to vote, to support all voters in safely accessing ballot drop boxes and to deescalate any election-related threats and intimidation. The initiative included the Defend Democracy hotline, toolkit and radio public service announcements. We received and responded to hotline calls ranging from overflowing ballot drop sites in Clatsop County to stolen yard signs in Lake County to armed people stopping voters at a ballot drop site in Springfield.

The STAND Election Guide by and for rural Oregonians that shared easy-to-understand information on the ballot measures and how to vote in English and Spanish was distributed statewide through 36,000 paper copies, social media, and more than 19 community radio stations! We broadcast a special election edition of our Rural Roots Rising radio show and podcast to include our ballot measure recommendations, stories of human dignity groups organizing around the elections and helpful public service announcements for stations.

Human dignity groups called thousands of voters to talk about the issues, organized ballot pick-ups and deliveries to drop boxes and set up outside of health clinics to pass out personal protective equipment, register people to vote and hand out STAND Guides! Thanks in large part to rural communities getting out the vote, Oregon passed ground-breaking statewide ballot measures that advance democracy, racial justice, decriminalization, and access to drug treatment.

What is the RURAL ORGANIZING PROJECT?

26 NEW GROUPS JOINED THE NETWORK THIS YEAR!



ROP member groups take action all year round for human dignity and democracy. Across Oregon, our network of 83 autonomous groups is building power and making change at the local and statewide level.

Human Dignity Group

Rural Organizing Fellow

Radio Station Playing

BAKER
Baker Community Justice Project
Panhandle Community Alliance
Power of People: Eastern Oregon

BENTON
Committees of Correspondence for Democracy and Socialism
Corvallis Latin America Solidarity Committee
Linn-Benton Greens
Race Matters, First Congregational UCC
Rapid Action Community Response
Veterans For Peace, Linus Pauling Chapter 132

CLACKAMAS
Indivisible Clackamas

CLATSOP
Columbia Pacific Alliance for Social Justice
Indivisible North Coast Oregon
North Coast Progressive Action

COLUMBIA
Columbia County Coalition for Human Dignity

CONFEDERATED TRIBES OF WARM SPRINGS
Unite Warm Springs

COOS
Human Rights Advocates of Coos County

CROOK
Central Oregon Peacekeepers
PFLAG Central Oregon
Central Oregon Diversity Project

CURRY
Indivisible North Curry County

DESCHUTES
Central Oregon Diversity Project
Central Oregon Peacekeepers
Clergy for Justice
Embrace Bend
Indivisible Bend
KPOV 88.9 FM High Desert Community Radio
Mecca Bend
PFLAG Central Oregon
Peace and Social Justice Team of First Presbyterian Church
Redmond Collective Action
Sisters Indivisible
Sisters Fight for Social Justice

DOUGLAS
Support for Asylum Seekers and Immigrants

GILLIAM
NORCOR Community Resource Coalition
Rural Voices

GRANT
Grant County Positive Action

HARNEY
Rural Alliance for Diversity

HOOD RIVER
Gorge Ecumenical Ministries / Somos Uno
Gorge ICE Resistance
Hood River Latino Network
Hood River Rapid Response Team
NORCOR Community Resource Coalition

JACKSON
Peace House
Veterans for Peace Rogue Valley Chapter 156

JEFFERSON
Madras Key Club

JOSEPHINE
Josephine Social Justice Alliance
Southern Oregon Indivisible

KLAMATH
Klamath Peace Readers
Sustainable Klamath

LAKE
Indivisible Lake County

LANE
Blackberry Pie Society
Church Women United
Community Alliance of Lane County
Community Rights Lane County
Deadwood Resists
Florence Indivisible
Florence ORganizes
Cottage Grove Community United
Springfield-Eugene SURJ
Stand for Peace/Occupy Cottage Grove
Support for Asylum Seekers and Immigrants
Tucker's Cupboard

LINCOLN
Acompañar
Central Oregon Coast Chapter of the National Organization for Women
Coastal Network
Coast Range Association
Lincoln County Progressive Project
PFLAG of the Oregon Central Coast

LINN
Albany Peace Seekers
Linn County Rapid Response Coalition
Linn-Benton Greens

MARION
Silverton Progressives

MORROW
Oregon Rural Action
Rural Voices

POLK
Polk Communities for Human Equality
Unidos Club at WOU

SHERMAN
Rural Voices

TILLAMOOK
Love Coalition
North County Racial and Social Justice

UMATILLA
Black Lives Matter March Pendleton
Economic Community for Healthy Opportunities
Oregon Rural Action
Raíces

UNION
Oregon Rural Action
Racial Justice Eastern Oregon

WALLOWA
Postcardia

WASCO
Gorge ICE Resistance
NORCOR Community Resource Coalition
Protect Oregon's Progress / The Dalles Indivisible
Wasco County Rapid Response Team

WASHINGTON
Adelante Mujeres
North Plains Grassroots

WHEELER
Rural Voices

YAMHILL
Progressive Yamhill
Unidos Bridging Community
West Valley Advocates

WASHINGTON STATE
Friends of Tyson Workers

INSPIRING YOUNG ORGANIZERS

Our second **Rural Organizing Fellowship** has brought together a group of 10 rural organizers between 16 and 30 years old who are making change in their communities! This year's cohort has been convening virtually to build their organizing skills, share strategies and take collective action together around the election, COVID-19 relief and catastrophic wildfires.

Rural Roots Rising, our monthly podcast and radio show featuring rural organizers telling the stories of how and why they organize to build rural people power, completed our first year-long season! Episodes featured how ordinary rural people have joined together to confront police brutality and systemic racism, built power to get more than 100 asylum seekers released from a federal prison in Yamhill County and forged new connections as more than 600 people celebrated the rich mosaic of cultures in Jefferson County!

Listen to Rural Roots Rising on one of our 19 partnered community radio stations across Oregon or subscribe wherever you listen to podcasts.

Let's connect!

Give us a call, check out our website and follow us on social media!

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