

Since 1965, Rural Resources has helped residents of Northeastern Washington help themselves and each other. Through education, resources and support, we offer real hope to children, seniors and families, working to create a strong and stable community for us all. Contact us at 509-684-8421. On the Web at www.ruralresources.org.

Sure, it's hot now...

(But it's still time to think about winter heating help)

With the sun beating down these days, heating your house may be the last thing on your mind. But you'll be left out in the cold if you wait 'til the thermometer drops to think about getting help with your winter heating needs.

Pre-applications will be going in the mail this month to those who requested and/or received energy help through Rural Resources last winter. They should be showing up in mailboxes by September 1.

Please fill out the forms and send them back as soon as possible, advises Energy Assistance Coordinator Dena Battin. The deadline for submitting applications is November 1; applications received after that date will be put on a waiting list.

In cooperation with other agencies and with local utilities, Rural Resources helps more than 3,500 people stay warm each year. Those in need include low-income families, disabled individuals and seniors on low and fixed incomes.

We also provide low- to no-cost weatherization help and energy-saving tips and information. (The latter is available to all regardless of income.)

If you struggle to pay your energy bills each year, we encourage you to apply for assistance even if you're not sure you would qualify.

"When we get the applications, we look to see if there may be other programs to help," Dena says. "We want to get everybody who's eligible on board."

For more information on our energy assistance programs or to request an application, call toll-free, 1-877-219-5542 or visit our website at www.ruralresources.org. Information also is available through your local utility company:

- ♥ Ferry County PUD, www.fcpud.com
- ♥ Pend Oreille County PUD, www.popud.com
- ♥ Avista Utilitites, www.avistautilities.com
- ♥ City of Chewelah, www.cityofchewelah.org
- ♥ Inland Power & Light, www.inlandpower.com

Youth Dot. Com

Helping at-risk and homeless youth find stability

When she came to Rural Resources seven years ago, "Dee" was a very thin 16-year-old with dark circles under her eyes and no idea where she'd spend her next night.

Turned away by her mother and step father, she had been sleeping on the floor of a relative's home until her clothing started disappearing and she was told she would need to start paying for food.

The girl was so desperate for a place to live that she was

In the course of a year, an estimated 500,000 to 1.5 million young people run away from or are forced out of their homes, and an estimated 200,000 are homeless and living on the streets. (Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services)

about to move into a known drug house with three males. Fortunately, she connected instead with Rural Resources' YouthDotCom program and Case Manager Jan Lecture.

So began a relationship that lasted well over a year. Jan met with the girl once or twice a week, finding a place for her to live; teaching her how to cook, shop and budget;



Jan Lecture talks to teens at Colville Park one recent Friday afternoon.

setting her up with a summer job through WorkSource; and becoming her advocate when she needed medical care.

With Jan's help, Dee (not her real name) eventually graduated from high school and went on to work and go to college in Spokane. The young woman is now happily married with a child of her own.

Dee is just one of many success stories to come out of YouthDotCom, a program in Stevens County for at-risk, runaway and homeless youth ages 12 to 18 and their families. Of the dozens of young people Jan has worked with over the last eight years, she says all but two found stable places to live.

YouthDotCom provides crisis intervention, short- and long-term counseling, access to educational and work opportunities, and safe and decent housing. It's committed to supporting youth in their efforts to remain at home, or when necessary, find alternative or host homes.

The program is currently funded by a three-year federal demonstration project set to expire next year.

"We're going to be looking for other funding after the first of the year so we can continue to serve these kids," says Jeff Michaelson, program manager for adult and long-term care programs at Rural Resources.

Jan, who has a caseload of about 30 teens, gets referrals

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from schools, churches and other social service providers. She also does her own outreach.

Every Friday during the summer months, she goes to Colville Park to involve the young people who congregate there in “challenge games” like chess and checkers. Her approach is casual and non-judgmental. She’s the caring adult should they want her help.

Many of these teens are fleeing violence and/or substance abuse in their families or have their own drug and alcohol addictions, Jan says. They may be “couch surfing” and extremely vulnerable. Her first goal is to get them to safety.

“When people think of homeless youth, they think of big, urban cities, but it’s a rural problem, too,” she says. “The factors that can lead a youth to run away or become homeless are everywhere.”

To learn more about YouthDotCom and how you can support it, visit www.youthdotcom.org or the Rural Resources website at www.ruralresources.org (click on Programs & Services and Homeless Teens).



This year’s *Women Making a Difference* luncheon is set for Friday, October 8, and will once again raise critical funds to support Rural Resources’ Family Support Center.

With Key Bank as the Signature Sponsor, the luncheon takes place from Noon to 1 p.m. at the Institute for Extended Learning – Colville Center (Colville Community College) at 985 S. Elm.

Keynote speaker for the event will be children’s mental health and trauma expert Natalie Turner, research associate for the Area Health Education Center of Eastern Washington at Washington State University in Spokane. Over the past three years, Ms. Turner has trained more than 8,000 people regarding the impact of trauma on children’s development and learning.

In addition to Key Bank and major donor Providence Mount Carmel Hospital, more than 20 other local businesses and corporations are also on board to support the event this year. If your company would like to learn about the benefits of becoming an underwriter of this inspirational annual event – or if you’d like to attend – contact Laurie Cole at the Family Support Center, lc@ruralresources.org or 509-685-6088.



YouthDotCom needs more licensed host homes to provide safe and temporary housing for at-risk and homeless young people. If you are interested in opening up your home and your heart to youth in need, please call Jan at 509-685-6066.

‘In Action’ photos courtesy of Valerie Lamont

Lincoln County households receive heating help

Nearly 400 Lincoln County households have gotten energy assistance since Rural Resources began providing services there in March.

Funding is available to help another 50 households, so those who have trouble paying their winter heating bills are urged to apply. The 384 Lincoln County households that already got help will automatically receive applications for energy assistance this coming winter.

To apply or learn more, call toll-free 1-877-219-5542. (Please identify that you are calling from Lincoln County.)

ActionSteps

By Barry Lamont

Rural Resources Executive Director



Back when I was in kindergarten, people didn’t know a whole heck of a lot about the value of “early childhood education.” Trying hard to sit still in that unfamiliar desk, I learned my ABCs and how to color inside the lines. (The ABCs stuck, but I still balk at staying within boundaries.) I’m sure my mom felt lucky to get me out of her hair for half a day, but I don’t think anyone told her that kindergarten was giving me a critical head start on the 16 years of learning that lay ahead.

Today, we know that children even younger than kindergarten age have little knowledge-soaking sponges for brains. At Rural Resources, we see the impact of early learning on the 154 four- and five-year-olds in our nine Head Start classrooms in six local communities.

Established by Congress in 1965, Head Start gives economically disadvantaged children and their families the support they need so kids can succeed in school and in life. In Head Start, children learn a whole lot more than just their ABCs. And, their families get help with the many

barriers that can block their children’s academic success – health care, jobs, parenting skills, nutrition and more.

How do we know that Head Start reaps huge benefits – to *all* of us?

One study released in 2004 followed 123 poor children from a public housing project in Michigan from the age of five until they were in their 40s. The 58 children who attended a preschool program did significantly better through the years than the 65 who did not. Two-thirds graduated from high school, compared with 45 percent of non-preschool kids. Nearly twice as many earned college degrees. The preschool group was more likely to have jobs and saving accounts and own their own homes. And they were far less likely to be on welfare, abuse drugs or serve time in prison.

The capper on this research for you and me? Economists estimate that the return to society on this preschool program was more than \$250,000 on an investment of just \$15,166 – that’s \$17 for every \$1 invested. A new study of 12,000 children showed similar results: Those who had quality early learning experiences earned significantly more money as adults.

While studies and statistics are fine, it’s common sense and what I’ve seen with my own two eyes over the past 20 years that mean the most to me. Head Start works, and I’m proud that Rural Resources is playing such an important role in so many children’s lives.

Taking action to prevent child sexual abuse

When Pam Jacobs learned from an article in the spring issue of the Rural Resources newsletter that we were providing free child sexual abuse prevention trainings in Stevens County, she called to schedule one at her apartment complex.

Pam manages the Woodhaven Apartments in Kettle Falls, home to many single-parent families and about 20 children. She saw an opportunity to educate herself as well as her tenants about a pervasive problem that all too often goes unreported.

Linda Norris of Rural Resources went to the complex in June and led a group of parents through Darkness to Light’s Stewards of Children, a prevention training program offered through our Family Support Center. Darkness to Light is a national organization that works to empower adults to prevent child sexual abuse. The comprehensive, 2½-hour training program helps parents, professionals and others understand the nature and impact of child sexual abuse and teaches them the steps they can take to protect children.

“Our goal is to train every adult in Stevens County,” Linda says. “The epidemic of child sexual abuse can end with education. It’s a preventable disease.”

Helping Rural Resources spread the word about Stewards of the Children is the American Association of University Women as well as volunteers working with our Family Support Center.

While the training is free in Stevens County, each participant is asked to donate \$10, if possible, to cover the cost of interactive manuals. Sessions in Ferry or Pend Oreille counties can be provided through Rural Resources’ partnering agencies or upon request. *For more information or to schedule a Darkness to Light training session, call 509-684-3796.*

Pam’s glad she called. Her own son is now grown, but she says she benefitted from parenting classes when he was younger. In fact, she’d like to offer other classes at the complex on issues that affect women and families.

“I think these classes are awesome, particularly for single parents,” she says. “The tenants really appreciated it.”