

Health Care Center grant to help sustain program

Unique grant will provide kids access to health care and leadership assistance

By Gini Bramlett
THE SOUTH COUNTY SPOTLIGHT

The Sacagawea Health Center in St. Helens has secured a 5-year grant with a novel approach.

Children First for Oregon and the Oregon School-Based Health Care Network (SBHC) has been awarded a \$1.275 million grant which will be distributed to school-based health care programs in Eugene, Lincoln County, Medford, Oregon City and St. Helens.

For the Sacagawea Health Center, it will mean approximately \$30,000 a year for five years from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation. The prestigious foundation has not only offered the dollars to help provide better access to health care for children without adequate insurance, it will assist in assuring the program's long-term sustainability.

According to Robin Loper, district nurse for St. Helens School District Health Services, this uniqueness insures the stability of the program. "People are more willing to put money into projects that have meat and potatoes behind it," said Loper, who secured the grant and strongly believes in school-based health care.

Loper heard about the grant in December through the State Assembly of School-Based Health Services. To be considered as one of the more than 40 centers in Oregon to be part of the program, the school district had to agree to form an association or "partnership" with the five other Oregon schools.

"Kellogg has been working at the national level for years and making headway," said Loper. "They felt it was time to take what they've learned and move it to



Medical assistant Christy Elb checks Lewis and Clark fourth-grader Trisha Cunningham's blood pressure, one of many services provided at the Sacagawea Health Center in St. Helens.

the state and local level."

The expectations of the partnership are extensive, but the rewards will be assurance that the program will develop a competent organizational structure and build effective leadership. In place will be leaders who will assist in public policy change on behalf of SBHC and educate and inform the community regarding the value of SBHC.

"They want to give us the resources over the next five years that will enable us to become a sustainable program, not only

for current services, but for the future," said Loper.

Oregon is one of only nine states participating in this unique funding program and most of the five schools are relatively rural. "I think the need is everywhere," said Loper, "but living here we don't have the resources available to those who live in a metropolitan area."

The overall goal is to have healthy children in our communities. Statistics presented by Peacehealth, a supporter of the program, show healthy schools begin with healthy kids. School-based care is about

keeping kids in school, healthy, and ready to learn.

The Sacagawea Health Center offers medical and dental care, mental health services, as well as preventative care and resources. With suicide being the second leading cause of injury-related deaths among 10-17-year-old kids in Oregon, access to mental health assistance is critical. Statistics show one of seven kids in Oregon consider suicide.

Goals for the state association are many, and hopefully, during the next five years

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