

Grant supports Kids Health group

The agency last year gave basic medical care to more than 2,000 students at three Medford schools

By **JONEL ALECCIA**
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A tiny Medford agency that provides medical care to kids at school has received a piece of a five-year, nearly \$1.3 million grant to Oregon organizations.

Kids Health Connection will receive between \$20,000 and \$30,000 of funds aimed at improving access to health care in five Oregon communities. In particular, the grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation focuses on changing public policy and community sentiment to

view school-based health centers as good sources of consumer-centered care.

"It's going to where the people are," said Karen Holt, executive director of Kids Health Connection in Medford.

That's long been the focus of Holt's agency, which last year offered basic medical care to more than 2,000 students in 3,400 visits at three Medford elementary schools. A fourth site will open this fall at Phoenix Elementary School.

Kids Health Connection was one of five agencies chosen to participate in a statewide partnership. Oregon was one of only nine U.S. states chosen for the grant.

Other participants include the Eugene 4-J School District,

the Lincoln County School-Based Health Centers, Oregon City High School and Sacagawea Health Center at Lewis and Clark Elementary School in St. Helens.

The bulk of the \$1.3 million will be used to strengthen infrastructure for the state's 40 school-based health centers, which serve 25,000 kids and youth each year. That includes four such centers in Jackson County, Holt said.

The grant will not provide direct funding or replace state funds for school-based health centers, which have fluctuated widely during Oregon's uncertain budget deliberations, she noted.

The funds will be administered by Children First of Ore-

gon in partnership with the Oregon School-Based Health Care Network.

Children First is a nonprofit, non-partisan group that uses various initiatives to improve the lives of children.

The health care network is a statewide membership of individuals and organizations that advocates for the health needs of Oregon's school-aged children.

The Kellogg grant is only the most recent award for the Kids Health Connection, which has more than doubled its annual budget to about \$700,000 during Holt's two-year tenure.

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